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THE STORY OF THE CAMBRIDGE BAPTISTS

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The Revd Robert Robinson.

of Cambridge,

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THE STORY OF THE CAMBRIDGE BAPTISTS

AND THE

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BERNARD NUTTER, M.A.

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PREFACE.

It is hardly necessary to say to Cambridge readers that I do not in the least pretend to be an authority upon the subject about which I have undertaken to write. Indeed the only valid reason for publishing this book is that there are certain "meane people" and "women-kinde" whose names ought to be remembered, and the present autumn seems an opportune time to recall them. I hope some Cambridge folk will be glad to make the acquaintance even of such insignificant individuals as *e.g.* the shoemaker, William Brasier; the Ana-baptist, Benjamin Metcalf; the Widow Pettit; the school-dame, Margaret Love; shy Prue Corby; and that incorrigible Dissenter, Dorothy Kitchinman.

In case this book falls into the hands of a Churchman, let me say how deeply I should be grieved if any sentence gave offence. I hope it is not necessary to add that I do not agree with all the opinions which are quoted. But I should be pleased if the book, with all its limitations, helped a Churchman to

understand that if a young Free Churchman knew anything of the history of Nonconformity, it would be quite natural for him to feel that certain traditions had been handed down to him from his forefathers, which it ought to be his duty to guard and cherish.

I should prefer, in some respects, to have substituted the word "Free Churches" for "Baptists" in the title, if I could have felt entitled to write about other Churches than my own; and a testimony to the real union of Congregationalists and Baptists is the fact that in two or three chapters I have made no attempt to separate their history.

It would be possible to make several excuses for devoting three chapters to Robert Robinson in a book of so brief a compass, but I trust readers will find them for themselves. In case anyone feels I have treated serious subjects rather lightly, I should like to make use of an apology in one of Robinson's books. "I have sometimes allowed myself a little mirth in that awful science, religion, and in the presence of that grave thing called a sermon: *but in this thing the Lord pardon His servant, that when my master went into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaned on my hand and I bowed myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon His servant in this thing.*"

May I take this opportunity of thanking many friends throughout the county, and one or two

at a distance, who have allowed me to see old records, lent pictures, etc., and sometimes gone out of their way to give kindly encouragement. I fancy most of them will prefer to remain nameless.

BERNARD NUTTER.

CAMBRIDGE, 1912.

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I.

FOUNDED IN GRACE.

"Lord we lewd (ignorant) men have a belief that thy goodness is endless and if we keepen thy hests then ben we thy true servants. Men singen thy words and that singing they clepen thy service but Lord I trow that the best singer herieth (worship) thee not most."—*The Plowman's Prayer.*

It is not easy to go back in imagination to the Cambridge of the Middle Ages. We have to try to picture to ourselves a group of four hundred scattered houses, chiefly on the right bank of the river. With the exception of a few monasteries and churches, there were no imposing buildings. Peterhouse, the oldest college, was not founded till 1284. The streets were narrow and ill-kept, and the houses were chiefly of wood. We read of a certain Piron Lane in the centre of the town, which suggests an avenue of pear trees, but for the most part the town must have been an exceedingly dirty and uninteresting place. Gray's allusion to the "quiet ugliness" of Cambridge could have been pardoned if it had been applied to those far-off days.

Still, the town was of considerable importance. Stourbridge Fair at Cambridge was the great event of the year in the eastern counties, and possessed even a European reputation.

Before shops existed in the various towns, and when travelling was difficult, it formed a most important business mart. Even as late as the eighteenth century, when the trade of the Fair was declining, we read of woollen goods being sold to the value of many thousand pounds in a single week. At the time of the Fair, the river, "the life of the trafficke to this Towne and Countie," would be full of boats unloading their stores of merchandise from Lynn and the Continent, and perhaps no feature of medieval Cambridge is more difficult for a modern dweller by the Cam to picture than the busy wharfs along her banks. But the Fair was not only a centre of commerce; it was also a medium for the diffusion of knowledge. And it is much more likely that the University owes its origin to some travelling teacher of Stourbridge Fair than to the monks of Ely. To this old-time Cambridge, "that distant marsh town," to quote the famous description of an Oxford don, the students, most of them only boys, came in increasing numbers as the fame of the teachers spread. Like German students of to-day, they lodged where they pleased, and a great nuisance they seem to have proved to the worthy burgesses. Many were the street fights and brawls. Apparently, the chief occupation of the University Corporation was that of keeping the scholars out of the jurisdiction of the town; for quickly there sprang up the most intense

rivalry between the University and the town officials, traces of which existed until quite recently in the fights between "town and gown." In 1382 there was a great riot, when John de Grantchester led the townsmen to sack the houses of the University officials, and to burn their charters. One old woman, Margaret Sterr, gathering up the ashes of the charters, scattered them to the winds, crying "Away with the learning of the clerks. Away with it!" a sentiment which has been re-echoed more than once in later years.

It is to these stormy days of Cambridge life that we must go back if we would discover the beginnings of local Dissent. For although Nonconformity proper does not begin till the seventeenth century, yet, centuries before, there were men asserting principles not altogether unlike those of its modern representatives. So genuine a student as Mr. Coulton has done good service to the side of truth in pointing out what he calls "the high ancestry of Puritanism," and in showing that many of the beliefs which are popularly associated with sects and schism are thoroughly medieval. The "personal assurance of salvation," which seemed to Newman characteristic of "the extreme of Calvinism or Methodism," is found again and again in Franciscan legends. "A man dissatisfied with the modern world, if suddenly set back into his imaginary paradise of the thirteenth century,

would find himself still confronted by a great deal which he specially abhors in modern Nonconformity; and it would, perhaps, grate on him all the more for being then labelled with the label of the Church. Even Baptists and Ritualists are on better terms with each other nowadays than were the parish clergy and the friars of the Middle Ages; and the modern priest, who loses no opportunity of expressing his dislike for Puritanism, little suspects how much Puritanism there was in the highest places during the crowning period of the pre-Reformation Church."

It is, however, to Wiclif and the Lollards of the fifteenth century that Nonconformists usually turn for the first clear enunciation of their fundamental principles. Wiclif has been called a Free Churchman before the Free Church movement, and a Nonconformist to-day would certainly find much in common with a medieval Lollard. In the *Plowman's Prayer*, preserved by Foxe, the writer attacks the priests who have usurped Christ's power of forgiveness. The tears and cries of the penitent, he declares, are more pleasing in God's sight than "never so many quaint prayers." A human soul is more truly God's abode than "the great stonen house full of glassen windows." It is unjust that God's living images should be exposed to cold and hunger while "mawmets" (idols) are decorated with gold and silver. The shepherds, he

maintains, have excluded Christ's sheep from His fold, and fed them with a "sorry soure pasture" of untruths.

It would be difficult to over-estimate the real greatness and originality of John Wiclif. He translated the Bible that the way-faring man might understand it, proclaiming it as the ultimate court of appeal in matters of conduct, doctrine, and Church government. He claimed the right of private judgment in matters of religion, and boldly declared that "every man ought to be a theologian." He did not hesitate to criticise the wealth and temporal power of the Church. "Christ, during His life upon earth, was of all men the poorest, casting from Him all worldly authority." He even anticipated the views of the Liberationists. "The laity may, on occasion given, both diminish and take away Church property from those set over them as bishops and clergy." All true authority, proclaimed Wiclif in his treatise *The Kingdom of God*, is "founded in grace." Dominion or power in its highest sense rests with God alone, and is granted, not merely to the Pope, Christ's Vicar on earth, but to all men. Every individual "held" according to the feudal notions of the time, immediately from God, and His throne was the tribunal of personal appeal.

We can hardly realize to-day how revolutionary and strange such views must have sounded in the fifteenth century, and it is not surprising

that the Lollards suffered much persecution. But they were not quite the first Cambridge Dissenters. In 1240, the first known Cambridge heretic was taken to London and imprisoned for declaring against going to church, for maintaining that Gregory IX. was no true Pope, "that the devil was let loose," and for holding certain heterodox views concerning the Incarnation. We must not take too seriously the charges against the heretic, for heretics are seldom appreciated by their contemporaries. And although it is quite possible that this Carthusian friar was some infatuated enthusiast who was safer under lock and key, yet we should like to believe that even in that far-off century there was a Cambridge man who was not afraid to think for himself.

But the "heretic" of 1240 is only an isolated individual. It is not till the fifteenth century, and the rise of the Lollards, that we find in Cambridge a company of men opposed to the authority of the Church in religious matters. In 1412, we read of Peter Hirforde being compelled to renounce the tenets of Wiclif; and in 1431 there is an interesting letter from Henry VI. to the Abbot of Bury St. Edmunds, warning him that there was likely to be a gathering of Lollards and "other robbers and pillers of the people" in the vicinity of Cambridge. In 1457 we find traces of a real Lollard congregation in Cambridge. John Crud (Crowde) of Cam-

bridge, Robert Sparke of Reach, and John Baile of Chesterton, were brought before Gray, Bishop of Ely, and accused of holding opinions contrary to the Catholic faith; and being convicted on July 4th, they did public penance in the market of Ely, "standing in their shirts, with each a faggot on his shoulder, and a taper in his hand, while their abjuration was read; after which they walked to the high altar of Ely cathedral, where, kneeling and praying, they were scourged, and offered up candles to the image of St. Etheldreda." They also did penance at Cambridge and Gt. Swaffham.

Besides the denial of Transubstantiation, many *terrible* beliefs were attributed to these early Cambridge Dissenters. They actually maintained that images were not to be worshipped; that fasting was not binding on labourers and married people; that the presence of the priest at marriage was only made compulsory for the sake of gain; that there was no benefit in burial in consecrated ground; that prayer in the fields was as profitable as prayer in the church; and that children should not be baptized. "It was a pity," remarks Robinson, in a mischievous mood, "it was a pity the poor souls were forced to abjure the twelfth article, in which they are said to have affirmed that 'all priests and people in orders are incarnate devils!'" For our part we feel this belief is hardly the best result of dominion "founded in grace"!

II.

PURITANISM AND THE EARLY SEPARATISTS.

"The plungynge into the water sygnyfyeth that we die and are buried with Chryst as coserning ye old life of synne, which is Ada. And the pulling out agayn sygnyfyeth that we ryse agayn with Christe in a new lyfe ful of the holye gooste which shall teach us and gyde us and work the will of God in us; as thou seest. Rom. 6."—*Tyndale.*

A distinguished American writer many years ago expressed his surprise that since the Separatists were very largely Cambridge men, Cambridge had not demanded and obtained an account of their movements in all completeness.

Scholars have done good work in the history of the Separatists within recent years, but there still exists no popular narrative to show the part which Cambridge played in the early history of Nonconformity. There are perhaps Baptists who never connect Christ's College with John Smith, Welshmen who have forgotten that John Penry was educated at Peterhouse, and doubtless many an ardent Free Churchman visiting Cambridge has passed along Trumpington Street to visit the famous King's Chapel without remembering that a small college on the right is really the cradle of Nonconformity. For in Corpus College the pioneers of the Free Church movement received

their education. To this college belonged Robert Browne, founder of the "Brownists," his friend Robert Harrison, Greenwood, one of the earliest martyrs for holding Separatist principles, and John Robinson, founder of the Leyden Church, from which went forth the Pilgrim Fathers of America.

As early as 1568 we hear of certain divisions in the college. Complaints were apparently made to the Archbishop concerning some misdemeanours in manners and doctrine at Corpus. They arose "from a diversitie of religion whereon one party spited the other," but the Archbishop "compounded the matter, and brought them to quietness." The chief cause of the dispute seems to have been an order for Latin prayers to be said in the colleges, and some of the members of Corpus were so impolite as to declare that "Latin prayers were the Pope's dregs."

The doctrines of the Reformation had spread rapidly at Cambridge. The famous group of scholars who met for discussion at the White Horse—where now stands the Bull Hotel—soon made an impression on Cambridge life and thought. And although Protestantism received a temporary check in the reign of Mary, yet the martyrdoms of John Hullier on Jesus Green, and of William Wolsey and Robert Pygott at Ely, only served to show that there were limits to man's obedience to the State in matters of

religion. The way was prepared for Cartwright and Puritanism. From attacking "vestments" and "Latin Prayers" some extreme Puritans went on to criticise and deny all episcopal authority, and hence arose the Separatists and Separatism.

Robert Browne took his degree in 1572. He is an interesting, and often misunderstood, personality. Not long after leaving Cambridge we find him coming under the influence of a remarkable clergyman at Dry Drayton, the Rev. R. Greenham (Pembroke), who was courageous enough to permit young Browne to preach and teach in the village, despite the Bishop's prohibition. From Dry Drayton Browne proceeded to St. Benet's Church, Cambridge, where, "under the shadow of the University," he boldly proclaimed his doctrines. He was an extreme Puritan, with scant respect for the University divines. "Their tossing to and fro of psalms and of sentences is like tennis play, whereto God is called a Judge who can do best and be most gallant in his worship . . . . For the minister and people are bridled like horses, and everything appointed unto them like puppies." "Their hotch-potch at Paule's Cross, or at St. Marie's in Cambridge must needs be fancied by vaunt of the tongues . . . . For as soon as they have stood up in famous places and showed their university degrees, and how well they become their hoods, or their scarlet

gowns, or of what standing in Cambridge and reading they are of in the tongues and Doctors . . —then you must needs call them Rabbi, Master, Doctor, My Lord Chaplain, Master Preacher, and our Divinity Lecturer"! Browne contemptuously burnt his Bishop's licence to preach, for he preached "not as leaning upon the Bishop's authority, but only to satisfy his conscience." On his departure from his Cambridge congregation "he sent back the money they would have given him." Browne's most important pamphlet is entitled *A Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Anie*, and in it he maintains that "the Kingdom of God was not to be begun by whole parishes, but rather of the worthiest, were they never so few," and that "the Lord's people is of the willing sort." It is sad to find that late in life Browne recanted most of his opinions; but we must not judge him harshly, for it was a broken man, with shattered nerves after being thirty-two times in prison, where sometimes "he could not see his hand at noonday," who thus yielded to the pressure of his enemies.

Another of the early Separatists is Barrowe of Clare (grad. 1570), a man of real intellectual power. After a wild, reckless life as a student, he was converted in London. Walking along the street with a friend, they passed a certain church where they could hear a preacher "very loud in his sermon." Barrowe suggested that they

should go in. "Tush," said the other, "what! shall we go to hear a man talk?" But they went in, and one at least came out a changed man. Henceforth, Barrowe was one of the leading Separatists, and suffered with Greenwood for his principles in 1593. When Queen Elizabeth inquired from the Earl of Cumberland how the martyrs met their death, he replied, "A very godly end, and prayed for your Majesty and the State."

Not far from Corpus College in Trumpington Street stands the oldest of the colleges, Peterhouse; and it is here that one of the most attractive of the pioneers of Nonconformity, the Welshman, John Penry, was educated. Eight years before Penry came into residence, Mr. Charke of Peterhouse had preached at St. Mary's asserting that the "states of bishops" were introduced into the Church by Satan, and that one minister in the Church ought not to be superior to another; and being cited before the Heads of Colleges, he "spared not to overthwart divers of the Heads in very unseemly manner, and with taunting words." We have noted, said his accusers, in a letter to the Chancellor, "the like hawtee stomache ever sythens we knew hym." But Burghley tried to save a really eminent scholar from the University authorities, and Dr. Rendel Harris, in his *Origin of the Leicester Codex*, has a short note on these Heads of Colleges!

Penry was very far from sharing Charke's opinions during his first years at Cambridge. His friends were Roman Catholics, and not unfrequently he stole out at night to join a fellow student in celebrating Mass. But some of the members of the University met for prayer and Bible reading, and at one of these meetings Penry's heart was touched, and he discovered his own sinfulness and need of a Saviour. He became one of Wales' most fervent evangelists. "They whose hearts the Lord hath touched," he was wont to say, "would thresh to get a living rather than the people should want preaching." In 1593 Penry suffered martyrdom for his principles.

It would be beyond the scope of this book to trace the spread of Puritanism throughout the University. King's was one of the few colleges little affected by the Puritan spirit, "their minds" being "set on greater and weightier concerns." St. John's was naturally a hotbed of Puritanism through the influence of Cartwright and Whittaker. As early as 1565 the fellows and scholars appeared in the college chapel without their surplices and hoods. But, for our purposes, the two colleges, in addition to Corpus, which played an important part in the rise of Nonconformity, are Christ's and Emmanuel.

At Christ's, some of the most interesting of the Puritan extremists received their education.

Sir Walter Mildmay, founder of Emmanuel, John Udall (the suspected writer of the Marprelate Tracts), Walter Travers, and Laurence Chaderton were all Christ's men. And to these must be added Arthur Hildersham and Richard Bernard, Puritans who could not conscientiously go the length of actual separation from the Church. Again and again we hear of a Christ's man disturbing the equanimity of the University with some direct message from the pulpit. It is a little difficult to-day to understand the part which the University sermon played in the sixteenth century, when grey-haired dons "ran like boys" to hear Cartwright, when the windows of the church were even taken down that those outside might hear the discourse. It requires some imagination to realize that in those much-abused Puritan days the University sermon sometimes led to the most remarkable conversions.

One of the most distinguished of the preachers from Christ's College was William Perkins (1558-1602). As a young man he led a drunken, dissolute life; but one day he heard a woman in the street say to a fretful child: "Hold your tongue, or I will give you to drunken Perkins yonder!" This chance remark made such an impression on him that it led to his conversion. He became a most godly man, and his preaching greatly influenced the younger generation of Puritans at Cambridge. Fuller's description of him is well-known. "An excellent chirurgeon

at jointing of a broken soul. He could pronounce 'damn' with such emphasis as left a doleful echo in his auditors' ears a good while after. . . When catechist of Christ's College in expounding the Commandments he applied them so home as able almost to make his hearers' hearts to fall down and hairs to stand upright."

Another member of Christ's College of even greater importance, from the Nonconformist point of view, is Francis Johnson, tutor to John Smith, who is often called the Founder of the Baptist movement. In a sermon at St. Mary's Johnson had little difficulty in showing that "the bewtie of the Church and government itself is far from that of the Presbyterie in the time of the Apostles." An imprisonment of ten weeks,—during which the college allowed him thirty shillings for commons, — did not convince him of the error of his ways, and eventually, in 1589, he was expelled from the University. For a time he resided abroad, but being converted to complete Separatism through the chance reading of Barrowe's works, he returned to England and was welcomed by the Separatists in London. The story of his career until his settlement at Amsterdam with the greater part of his followers is full of interesting episodes, including a hazardous voyage and a marriage with a stylish widow in Fleet Street Prison. His brother George takes a malicious delight in describing in minute detail the apparel

of the lady, which he considers "immodest and toyish" in a pastor's wife, and this description is carefully preserved in Trinity College library as a solemn warning to all generations.

But Johnson's real significance in the history of the Baptists has only recently been noticed. The careful researches of Mr. Burrage have shown that there was an Anabaptist movement connected with Johnson's congregation in 1594, and thus is destroyed the old notion that the first group of English Anabaptists was the company associated with John Smith in 1608. It is possible that Cambridge is connected with these earliest English Anabaptists through one of their leaders, Thomas Michell, who may well have been the first English se-Baptist. For in a record of marriages at Amsterdam we find that Thomas Michell, turner and widower of Cambridge, married Margaret Williams of Leicester in 1606.

There are other Cambridgeshire exiles on the register worth noticing, John Clark of Newton, and Elizabeth Smith of Cambridge. From Wisbech we find Jane Coulson and two sisters, Jacomine and Dorothy May. The latter at the age of sixteen married William Bradford, one of the Pilgrim Fathers of America. Her wedded happiness was of short duration, for she was drowned soon after landing in America, but her personality connects Wisbech with one of the most interesting movements of history.

Perhaps the chief centre of Cambridge Puritanism at the end of the century was Emmanuel College. This college had been founded, with Sidney Sussex, in 1584, with the definite object of combatting Popish practices. Sir W. Mildmay declared he had planted an acorn which would soon become a tree, and his prophecy proved correct. Very quickly the number of students at Emmanuel surpassed that of the other colleges, and right through the next century the college educated a long list of noble men, from John Harvard, founder of the famous American university, to Sancroft, who urged on the clergy "a very tender regard to our brethren, the Protestant Dissenters." So unbending was the Puritanism of the founder, that during the first hundred years of the college's existence the students worshipped in an unconsecrated building facing north, while surplices and hoods were completely discarded. They received the Sacrament sitting "upon forms about the Communion table, and doe pull the loafe one after the other after the minister hath begon." But Emmanuel was renowned for her high moral and religious tone, and in the pamphlets of the day there are references to "pure Emmanuel."

"Boldly I preach, hate a cross, hate a surplice,
Mitres, copes, and rochets.
Come hear me pray seven times a day
And fill your heart with crochets.

In the house of *pure* Emmanuel
I had my education
Where my friends surmise
I dazzled my eyes
With the light of Revelation."

A quaint story of Chaderton, the first Master, is told in "The Book of the Cambridge Review." "Bishop Bancroft was contemporary with Dr. Chaderton, ye known first master of Emmanuel College. Bancroft having business with him when he was in Lambeth sent for him and asked him his name if it was Chaderton. He replyed 'Yes.' 'I shall know it presently,' says he, shuts ye door, puts off his gown. 'If you be Chaderton you can wrestle, and I will try one fall.' (As they had often done in the University.) The Doctor flung ye Archbishop. 'Now,' says he, 'I know you are Chaderton.' Despatches him with handsome kindness. It was somewhat ominous ye Puritan should fling ye Archbishop!"

III.

SOME CAMBRIDGE MEN OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

"I received that opening from the Lord that to be bred at Oxford, or Cambridge, was not sufficient to fit a man to be a minister of Christ."—*George Fox.*

It is the boast and glory of the Baptists that their movement is essentially a movement of the working classes. Their congregations have from the first been composed of very humble men. Under the Tudors we read of scattered groups of Anabaptists, but none of these appear to have been men of culture. And in the seventeenth century the position of the Baptists was very much the same. Pamphleteers of the time found something very ludicrous in the idea of tradesmen acting as preachers. It seemed monstrous that Greene the felt-maker, Marler the button-maker, Spencer the coachman, and Rogers the glover should become preachers of the Gospel. They were never tired of pouring ridicule upon How the famous Baptist cobbler, and Praise God Barebones the leather seller. But we to-day can look back and feel grateful that the Baptist movement was initiated by humble men in humble circumstances. It was, and is, essentially a democratic movement.

Yet it is doubtful whether the Baptists would ever have developed into an organized body had it not been for certain cultured leaders. And it was Cambridge which educated the chief Baptist ministers of the seventeenth century. John Smith of Christ's, Francis Cornwell of Emmanuel, Henry Jessey of St. John's, Henry Denne and Hansard Knollys were all Cambridge men, justly famous in the annals of Baptist history.

John Smith is the most renowned of the little group. Matriculating at Christ's, 1586, he came under the influence of Francis Johnson, of whom he no doubt speaks in *A Pattern of True Prayer*. "I do here ingenuously confesse that I am far from the opinion of them which separate from our Church concerning the set forme of prayer (although from some of them I received part of my education in Cambridge.)" But Johnson was not the only Puritan with whom Smith came into contact. No doubt he often heard Perkins at St. Andrew's; and we like to imagine him reforming the world in true student fashion, in the company of William Bradshaw and William Ames of Emmanuel, and John Robinson of Corpus. From the first, Smith showed plainly his natural piety. In the diary of a contemporary Christ's man, the writer reproaches himself for his "thoughte of pride in that Mr. Smyth with me," and refers to "prayer in Mr. Smith his chamber." And we

should like to believe it was Cambridge memories which suggested, when Smith came to write a book on prayer, a sentence like the following: "I had rather speak five words to God in prayer from understanding, faith, and feeling, than say the Lord's Prayer over a thousand times, ignorantly, negligently, or superstitiously." On leaving Cambridge Smith took orders and became a preacher at Lincoln. It was here he wrote his first book, *The Morning Star*, the only known copy of which is in Emmanuel College Library.

We must pass over the steps by which Smith came to adopt Separatist principles, and decided to leave the country. We must accompany him to Amsterdam, where he met again his old tutor Johnson, now the pastor of a Church. It seemed at first as if Smith and his friends might unite with Johnson's congregation. But there were difficulties in the way. Mrs. Johnson was still a cause of jealousy among the humbler sisters, with "whalebone in her bodice and sleeves of her gown, and shoes with high cork heels." But a more real source of trouble was the presbyterian character of Johnson's Church. Smith would have nothing to do with a Church government that was not completely democratic, and so he withdrew and formed a separate Church in Amsterdam. There is a pathetic suggestion in one of Smith's books which shows the poverty of his people. When "the charge of bread and

wine be very great . . . and the poor cannot be adequately relieved, it would be well to save the cost of bread and wine and use the money in relieving the necessities of the saints."

Smith now felt the difficulty of repudiating the Church of England and retaining infant baptism. He carefully considered the matter, and finally adopted the principle of believer's baptism. The problem which at once presented itself was, who should baptise him. This he solved by baptising himself, and hence he is so often described as Smith the se-Baptist. But Smith himself soon had doubts as to whether he had acted wisely, and being a deeply conscientious man he sought baptism from the Mennonite Church at Amsterdam. Smith has sometimes been described as an erratic genius, but he was always true to his light and his darkness. His was a fine Christian spirit. In his last days he humbly retracted "all those biting and bitter words, phrases and speeches" which in the heat of controversy he had sometimes employed. In Amsterdam he gained a living as a physician. "He usually took nothing of the poorer sort, and if they were rich he took half as much as other doctors did, except some who were well able, and well minded, urged more upon him."

Smith died in Amsterdam, but some of his former friends, who had separated from him when he joined the Mennonites, returned to

England in 1612, and formed the first real Baptist Church in London. The foundation of this Church is of immense historical interest. To quote the well-known words of Professor Masson: "From their little dingy meeting house somewhere in old London there flashed forth first in England the absolute doctrine of religious liberty." "This obscure Baptist congregation became the repository for all England of the absolute principle of liberty of conscience expressed in their Amsterdam Confessions, as distinct from the more stinted principles advocated by the general body of Independents." But though a pamphlet, *Religion's Peace*, by a member of the Church, Leonard Busher, is commonly termed the first expression in the English language of the claim of every man to full liberty of thought and conscience, yet there is evidence that Smith had already in his writings stated similar principles. "The magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion or matters of conscience." "Christ alone is the King and Lawgiver of the Church and conscience." These are noble words written by a forerunner of Milton at Christ's College.

Henry Jessey has not the same historical importance as John Smith, but he is one of the most attractive of the Baptist leaders of the seventeenth century. He was educated at St. John's College, 1618, where he is registered under the name of Jacie. He soon showed

marked ability, and gained the Constable scholarship in 1622. In Cambridge he was converted, and resolved to enter the ministry, but for some time after obtaining his degree he remained at the University "studying Hebrew and living on 3d. a day." Though as a preacher he was "no Boanerges," yet crowds flocked to hear him during his ministry in London, and at his death, in 1663, it is said that five thousand people attended his funeral. He was a man of such rare knowledge of the Bible that his friends called him a living concordance, yet so humble that he wondered whether he ought to accept a London pastorate. The real generosity of the man is shown in his efforts to relieve the oppressed and despised Jews. He was, all his life, a great student, and yet managed to retain the child's faith in God and humanity. He kept a little book of Providences, noting down remarkable events. A quaint book of Jessey's is *A Looking-glass for Children*, wherein are recorded the religious experiences of a little girl, Mary Warren, whose admiration of her "plain Tammy Coat" convicted her of sin at the age of five or six. And when her mother said "It is not our Cloaths, but wicked Hearts that hurt us!" she answered, "Aye, mother, fine Cloaths make our hearts proud"!

In his earliest years Jessey was an Independent, and the minister who re-baptised him was Hansard Knollys. From childhood, Knollys was

surrounded by good influences. In his home was a tutor "who was a godly and conscientious young man. He gave us good instruction for our souls, and convinced us of the sin of Sabbath-breaking." At Cambridge Knollys came into contact with the Puritans. "I now began to search diligently the Scriptures, becoming acquainted with gracious Christians called Puritans." On leaving college he became a schoolmaster, and was ordained, but was unsettled in his convictions. One day, alone in a wood, he poured out his soul to God, and besought Him for guidance; and as he was returning home the answer to his prayer came in these words "Go to Mr. Wheelwright, and he shall tell thee and show thee how to glorify God in His ministry." Knollys, therefore, visited Wheelwright, a vicar who had been silenced for his Independent principles. "You cannot glorify God either in the ministry or anything else," said the worthy man, "for you are building on works, not on grace." From henceforth Knollys became a powerful Baptist preacher.

After a few years in America, whither he had fled from persecution, he returned (1641), as he said, "to be knocked about in old England," and certainly no easy life awaited him. On his arrival, after paying for his lodging, he had only sixpence left in his pocket. Great was his astonishment when an unknown friend met him in the street and handed him twenty

shillings. His wife was overjoyed. "My dear husband, how sweet it is to live by faith, and trust God upon His bare word. Let us rely upon Him while we live and trust Him in all straits." In 1645, Knollys gathered together a congregation of his own in London, and became a recognized leader among the Baptists. Unlike John Smith, he was a strong Calvinist, and thus was an early member of that portion of the denomination known as Particular Baptists. Knollys did much for the principle of toleration, and his name is attached to several petitions to Parliament on the question. He died in 1691, "preaching to the last, when he could scarcely stand or make his voice heard."

More has been written in America than in England concerning the career of Roger Williams of Pembroke, 1623. And this is only natural since Williams is said to have planted the first Baptist Church in Providence, "the mother of eighteen thousand Churches of a like faith and order in the Continent of America."

Recent research is rather inclined to question the claim of the Providence Church to be the first non-immersionist Anabaptist Church in America, and Roger Williams certainly held Baptist views for an exceedingly short time, but he is of great importance as one of the earliest Separatists of New England. He was a bitter enemy of all who attempted to identify Church and State in the new country. He

was a whole-hearted Free Churchman when many of the settlers were only Puritans. Bradford describes his character exactly when he says he was "a man godly and zealous, having many precious parts, but very unsettled in judgement."

In our list of Baptist worthies educated at Cambridge we must not omit Francis Cornwell of Emmanuel, 1618. He was not a man of affairs, and he made no great stir, but he was one of the most learned of the Puritans who adopted Baptist principles. He was imprisoned at Maidstone for his Puritan objections to ceremonial in the Church. Here, a woman, who was perplexed on the subject of infant baptism, sought his advice. Cornwell gave her the usual arguments in its favour, but when she was gone he carefully considered the matter afresh, and re-read the scriptures. As a result he became a Baptist, and separated from the Established Church. He was quite content for the rest of his life to minister to a little company of believers at Cranbrook in Kent. The very titles of his books bear witness to his opinions: *Gospel Repentance floweth from Faith and attendeth a justified Person all his dayes* (which is dedicated to Cromwell); and *King Jesus is the Believer's Prince, Priest, and Law-giver in things appertaining to the conscience.*

IV.

HENRY DENNE.

"He that would make a good Christian let the love of God be the first stone which he layeth for the foundation."

Denne.

There are few Baptists in the seventeenth century who deserve to be better known than Henry Denne, and certainly none who should be more highly honoured in Cambridgeshire. Denne's evangelistic labours contributed largely to the rise of the Baptists in the county.

He was educated at Cambridge, whence he proceeded, 1630, to a living in Hertfordshire. Here, "being a more frequent and lively preacher than most of the clergy," he was greatly beloved. In Baldock, 1641, a sermon seems to have caused a great sensation among his clerical brethren, and this is hardly surprising. "Thus do you," he said boldly, "in some cases dissolve in the tavern that which you professed in the pulpit, making a mock at the ordinances of God, seducing those by your conversation for whom Christ died"! "What," he continues, "is become of apostolical zeal, of primitive courage, when we are so careful and fearful that we dare not conform truly, rebuke boldly, for fear of displeasing our patrons, for fear of losing our hope of getting preferment." In 1643, Henry

Denne was "re-baptised by a mechanick" in London, and, full of zeal, went forth to proclaim his gospel in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. "Here," says the virulent Presbyterian, Edwards, "he did much mischief," though this seems to have been nothing more terrible than the founding of a little Baptist community at Fenstanton on the borders of Huntingdonshire. Sects at this time were rapidly increasing in numbers, and it was no doubt suspicion of the practices of the Baptists which led to the imprisonment of Denne in Cambridge gaol, and later, in London (1644). This imprisonment was happily no misfortune for the Baptist movement, for in gaol Denne met the famous Dr. Featley, whose book *The Dippers Dipt, or the Anabaptists Ducked and Plunged Over Head and Ears*, aroused no little interest at the time of publication. "Of all heretics and schismatics," wrote Dr. Featley, "the Anabaptists ought to be most carefully looked into and severely punished, if not utterly exterminated. They flock in great multitudes to their Jordans, and both sexes enter into the river and are dipt after this manner with a kind of spell containing heads of their erroneous tenets . . . . And as they defile our river with their impure washings, and our pulpits with their false prophecies and fanatical enthusiasm, so the presses sweat and groan under the load of their blasphemies." In 1645 Denne published a reply

to Dr. Featley, *The Foundation of Christian Baptism Discovered*, and followed this with a suggestive little pamphlet *Grace, Mercy, and Peace*, which is one of the earliest expressions of Baptist theology. "Christ given is the effect of God's love, not the cause." "God doth not love us because He foresaw we should repent and believe, but therefore caused us to repent and believe because He loveth us." Denne appears in his writings and sermons as an evangelist with wide conceptions of God's grace. "His usual theme of discourse is Christ dying for all, for Judas, as well as for Peter." And there is something of William Carey's spirit in the man who could thus challenge his opponents: "Thou art thus presumptuous and audacious to contradict the Lord Jesus, who hath given commandment that the gospel of peace should be preached *to all nations*." Denne was suspicious of any half-hearted proclamation of God's grace. "Let us not sow the Lord's field with mingled seed, nor clothe them with a linsey-woolsey garment for whom the Lord hath prepared a vesture of fine linnen." He had a fine scorn for any lack of sincerity and earnestness in religion. People who attended services to hear "witty discourses" are like "little children which had rather their mother should give them peares and plums than wholesome food." The preacher might be in a humble position provided he were sincere. "We shall as soon find

him in the universitie of Newgate or some other prison, as in great men's houses; we shall as soon find him in a cloud of reproach as in a fat Benefice or Cathedrall dignitie."

After his release from prison Denne became minister of the parish of Eltisley, residing in the neighbouring village of Caxton. It seems that James Disbrowe, the lord of the manor, was favourably disposed towards the Baptists, and became an elder in Denne's congregation at Fenstanton. So puritanical were the services that the Tory writer Noble remarks, "Psalm singing was as heinous a sin at Eltisley as bending the knee to Baal. And it was then as much noted for the devout exercises practised there as any other place in the kingdom." From Eltisley Denne journeyed to the neighbouring villages and towns preaching the gospel. He refused to be thwarted in proclaiming his message. At Spalding he was arrested for baptising four persons in the river. At St. Ives, unable to preach inside the church, he delivered his sermon under a great tree, to the mortification of his opponents.

The next few years of Denne's life are wrapt in some obscurity. From a newspaper of the time we learn that he took part in the Civil War, and he is known among the Parliamentarians as "Cornet Denn, or as we call him Parson Denn." For leading a mutiny against the despatching of troops to Ireland he came into trouble with

the leaders of the army, and only the mercy of Cromwell saved him from execution.

But in 1653 Denne was back again at Fenstanton and preaching to his little congregation, with true Baptist instinct, a sermon from the text "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." He was himself appointed a travelling evangelist in the neighbouring district. "On the eighth and twentieth day of the eighth month a fast was observed with prayer to Almighty God for wisdom and discretion, after which Henry Denne was chosen and ordained by the laying on of hands a *Messenger* to divulge the gospel of Jesus Christ."

"We came first to the house of Robert Kent at Kingston, where first of all we conferred with the wife of the said Robert . . . . She affirmed . . . . that the Scriptures were not the ground of her faith, but an inward principle whereby she was led. That the command to be baptised was no command to her because she was not called forth to obedience by an inward principle. It was then demanded of her by way of objection whether to love and obey her husband were not a command, though she should want an inward principle to move her to it? To which she made no pertinent answer"! In the unconscious humour of the recorder we have an allusion to the Quakers, of whom we shall hear more anon.

Leaving Kingston, the evangelists proceeded to Toft, to the house of one Peck. "We found his wife at home, who seemed to question all truth, and to doubt whether there was such a person as the Virgin Mary, or Jesus Christ born in Bethlehem." This is only one of many examples we could give to show the religious unrest in Cambridgeshire at this time, and the interest of the most illiterate in religious questions.

"And the same day we came to Haslingfield, where we visited our brother and sister Barfurd. Our sister wept for joy to see us, and when we had prayed with them, and comforted them, we departed, and came that night to Hawson, where we lodged at Bro. Raymond's house."

"On 5th day of the month (1653) we departed from Hawson and came to Cambridge. We went to Bro. Hindes, and at the first we made known unto him and the rest of the brethren the intent of our coming, which they hearing, did labour to provide a place in public, which was obtained. And on the first day of the week Bro. Denne preached the doctrine of baptism, proving that believers ought to be baptised; that infants ought not to be baptised; and that ordinances were not ceased (a hit at the Quakers). The concourse of people that were present were all silent in the public place. Some followed us into our brother's house and confessed that it was the truth which was

preached; unto whom it was said 'Why do ye not then obey it?' They answered, 'We desire to hear further and to consider it further.'"

"On the 7th day of the month, tidings were brought that some were discontented, and threatened that the public place should not be opened to us the next first day . . . This day we took with us brother Harlow and we did go unto John Love and his wife to admonish them of their fault in forsaking the assembly of the people of God. The woman answered: 'That where they were, they were, and where we were, we were; as for them they had higher manifestations of God and higher enjoyments than when they walked in fellowship, and that they did not forsake the people of God, for God's people were not all of one sort.' We desired her to declare to us what those manifestations were. She answered, she was not willing to declare, or give an account of them. We asked her husband what he said to these matters. He answered he was of the same mind with his wife. Then we declared to them that we would return their answer to the congregation, desiring of them we might have it in writing, which they refused. When we departed, the wife of Love said: 'We care not; I am sure you cannot excommunicate us from the Almighty.'"

"From thence we departed to find sister Odell, to admonish her of her disorder in forsaking

the assembly; but we found her not. Then we departed the town, brother Harlow accompanying us part of the way; whom when we had sent back, we went to Shelford to the house of Francis Holmes, whose wife was lately baptised, who rejoiced much to see us. And her husband gathered together the inhabitants and we spake unto them the same things that were spoken at Cambridge. The people seemed very well affected to that which was spoken, although it had not been heard in the like manner before, and one woman openly professed that we had spoken the truth, and not one contradicted."

After visiting brother Gatward and sister Glinister at Royston, and after another short stay at Cambridge, where "intending to have spoken in public the next day we were resisted by such as opposed the truth," Denne once more arrived at Hawson. Here he met with what appeared a most favourable reception. "The priest and the chiefest men of the town sent me to come and preach in their public places." But it was only a ruse. "The rude multitude gathered together and would not suffer me to speak: they being suborned by those which sent me to preach, as it did most evidently appear afterwards. Whereupon I departed from them and spake in a private house."

At Shelford there was evident hostility. "Satan stirred up the priest, a justice of the

peace, and several others against us: yea, many of those that sent for me durst not come to us, only they sent their servants and children. The people seemed to be generally affected with the truth, and two of them, viz. Francis Holmes, and Mary Green, went along with me to Hawson the next night and were baptised . . . Also one King propounded himself to be baptised, but he desired liberty to hear the priests of England as he should see fit. I demanded of him whether he thought they were the ministers of Christ or of anti-Christ . . . He then confessed that they were the ministers of anti-Christ, but he said they preached many good doctrines. I replied, the devil did so, as when he said that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Then after many words he said that he hired a farm of Mr. Bendick, and if he should know that he was baptised he would turn him out. I told him that the earth was the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and wished him to trust God, and He would be a better landlord than Mr. Bendick. Then he said he would consider of it, and so departed."

After his labours in Cambridgeshire, Denne went on a mission to Kent where he settled as minister of a congregation in Canterbury. Of his subsequent history we know little. His name was attached to the "Humble Apology" protesting against the charge made against the Baptists of participation in Venner's revolt, and

he became the author of several pamphlets. One gives an account of a public discussion in London with Dr. Gunning, Bishop of Ely. Burnet describes the latter as "a dark and perplexed preacher. His sermons were full of Greek, Hebrew, and of the opinions of the Fathers. Yet many of the ladies of a high form loved to hear him preach, which the king used to say was because they did not understand him." The debate indeed originated through the request of a lady whose mind was disturbed on the question as to whether infant baptism was of God or not, and it attracted thousands of hearers. A public discussion between a Bishop of Ely and a Baptist minister is no common event, so we must give a portion of the argument.

DR. GUNNING. "Infants unbaptised (where there is no desire of their baptism in their parents or friends) shall be shut out of Heaven."

DENNE. "If unbaptised infants be shut out of heaven then God punisheth some creatures for that which they cannot help. But God punisheth no creatures for that which they cannot help. Therefore unbaptised infants are not shut out of Heaven."

DR. GUNNING. "I deny the consequence."

DENNE. "Then shutting out of Heaven is no punishment."

Apparently the learned Bishop declined further controversy, and anyhow, the lady was baptised by Denne a few days after the debate.

V.

QUAKERS AND BAPTISTS.

"All life seems to me more beautiful since my own 'personal' life seemed to be done with. . . . What I had not at all foreseen was the sense I should have of this better life being there for *everybody*. . . . It is as if my painted roof had been smashed, and instead of the darkness I had dreaded, I had found the stars shining."—*Caroline Stephen.*

Few visitors who are privileged to share in the peace and quietness of the Friends' Meeting in Jesus Lane would suspect that the meetings were once scenes of the wildest disorder. They would be loth to believe that there was a time when scholars and soldiers took a delight in breaking up the assemblies of those whom they regarded as the most objectionable fanatics of the seventeenth century. The most pessimistic individual must confess that some progress has been made, seeing that the University, which once scorned George Fox, undertakes to-day the publication of his Journal.

There were from the first many points of contact between the Quakers and the Baptists. George Fox himself, through his uncle Pickering, learned something from the Anabaptists, and it was a "shattered" Baptist community at Mansfield which proved a formative influence in Fox's career, and from which he drew his first followers.

The Anabaptists held many of the Quaker views on the subject of war, oaths, and a "hireling ministry"; and before Fox had begun to preach publicly, a Baptist like Henry Denne had emphasised the doctrine of the "Inner Light" in *The Dragnet* and other books. In fact, it would hardly be an exaggeration to claim that Quakerism was primarily a movement for a deeper spiritual life among the Anabaptists of the seventeenth century. Many of the Quakers of that time were drawn from what Fox would call "shattered" Baptist communities.

We have already seen how Denne was troubled in his work by people who denied the value of all ordinances. At Littleport, 1655, two Baptist elders, Samuel and Ezekiel Cater, "turned aside after the people commonly called Quakers, denying the Holy Scriptures, denying the ordinances of God, denying the Church of God." The general assembly of the Baptists at Cambridge sent two brethren to excommunicate them. One deputed brother relates: "I took a text of scripture and preached to them Jesus, both in His person, and ordinances, vindicating both them and also the Holy Scriptures from those wicked whimsies and nonsensical interpretations which the Quakers put on them. . . . Yet when I had done one of them did rail on me in such a rude and frothy manner that I turned aside without answering thereto, lest I should be like him."

At a private meeting next day, continues the recorder, "the Quakers thrust in at the doors," and "their impudence is beyond measure." These conversions to Quakerism were due to the preaching of a young Quaker, James Parnell, who says of his disputes with the Baptists of the neighbourhood, "In much power was I carried forth to the binding and claiming of the *heathen!*" It was quite natural that the Baptists should resent the breaking up of their congregations through the introduction of Quaker views, especially when some former Baptist stalwart, like Elizabeth Hooten, turned round and "preached against their deceit"! Still, the Baptists, even at this early date, needed to learn the essentially spiritual character of religion. And to re-affirm this was, and perhaps still is, the work of Quakerism in the Baptist movement.

Samuel Cater, to whom reference has been made, was a well-known Quaker in the seventeenth century. He was an associate of the notorious James Nayler, and was several times imprisoned for his principles. But, unlike Nayler, he seems to have been a man of some sagacity. He was the author of a pamphlet to his new brethren in the faith "warning them to take heed of drowsiness and sleeping in Meetings, a great disorder, and a heavy burden to the righteous that sit with you." But to the Cambridge Quakers he is chiefly interesting

on account of his famous debate at Triplow, 1676, with the Nonconformist heroes, Holcroft and Oddy, in which Cater clearly came off best. Cater declared that "every man is enlightened of Christ," which Holcroft at once stigmatised as "cursed idolatry." The Quaker answered that Holcroft was "in great confusion, and was in knowledge more brutish than a beast." At this auspicious moment Oddy entered, and congratulated his friend on the good work he was doing among a "generation of vipers." A few pleasantries of this kind were exchanged, and then a member of the company suggested a discussion on the time-honoured question of election. Holcroft had no doubt that some children were in a state of damnation before birth. Cater argued that this was clean contrary to the scriptures, since "Christ speaks of a little child as happy, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Holcroft was no match for the Quaker, and when personalities were introduced into the debate he made a pretence of shaking the dust off his feet and prepared to depart. Oddy was begged to remain, but preferred to accompany his friend. So the two "hastened away with railing words in their mouths."

The sufferings of the Cambridge Quakers begin with the visit of Ann Williams and Mary Fisher in 1653. For these women preachers the town had no mercy, and they were stripped to the waist and flogged at the Market-Cross. In the

following year James Parnell, aged seventeen, preached the gospel in Cambridge, was thrown into prison, and eventually turned out of the town "like a vagabond." In 1655 came the great leader, George Fox himself. Everyone knows the account of his difficulties with the students, and the impression his personality made upon them. "I kept on my horseback, and rode through them in the Lord's power. 'Oh!' said they, 'he shines: he glisters,' but they unhorsed Captain Amor Stoddart before he could get to the inn. . . . And the people of the house asked me what I would have for supper, as is the usual way of inns. 'Supper,' said I, 'were it not that the Lord's power was over these rude scholars [it] looked as if they would make a supper of us, and pluck us to pieces, for they knew I was set against their trade, which they were there as apprentices to learn, the trade of preaching."

The University towns have been severely blamed for the treatment they meted out to the early Quakers. But we must not allow the attractiveness of so much in modern Quakerism to blind us to the fact that the Quakers of the seventeenth century were not always gifted with the grace of discretion. Ann Blaykling was not over wise, "who was moved to go through the colleges while they was at meat . . . . at the eleventh and twelfth hour"; and Mary Fisher was valiant, but only thirty years

of age, when she tackled the scholars of Sidney Sussex College. And Cambridge was certainly not the best place in which to preach publicly, as Parnell did, against Universities, learning, and the clergy. One custom among the early Quakers must have been abhorrent to good churchmen—that of walking naked, as a sign to the people of their sins.

This action was performed quite solemnly; friends accompanying the enthusiast with his clothes. Fox tells us of one George Simpson who "was made oftentimes to colour his face black" and walked naked through the Cambridge streets. "And the Mayor of Cambridge put his gown about him, being sensible there was something in the thing."

It was actions of this kind which encouraged the spread of the most extravagant stories about the Quakers. In 1659, at the Assizes, Margaret Pryor of Long Stanton complained that Widow Morlin "put a bridle into her mouth and transformed her into a bay Mare, and rode upon her to Maddenly House." John Bunyan is said to have taken the side of "goodwyfe Pryor," but Alderman Blackley, a well-known Cambridge Quaker, denied the charges against Widow Morlin and her friends in "A Lying Wonder Discovered," 1659.

Still, in spite of some vagaries, the Quakers were aiming at a lofty spiritual ideal, and amid the follies of the Restoration period they suffered

severely in Cambridge for their defence of religious liberty. In 1659, George Whitehead writes thus from Chesterton: "The first meeting I had in Cambridge, when there were pretty many sober people, was very serviceable . . . . but towards the end there came in many rude scholars." These scholars,—Barclay calls them "small fry of the clergy,"—assisted by soldiers and townspeople, again and again broke up Quaker meetings. Sometimes blood was shed, and even women were brutally injured. The accounts of these scenes in contemporary documents we are almost ashamed to reproduce. Here is a description of a Cambridge Friends' Meeting in 1660.

"Upon the 8th day off the 2nd month Called Aprill 1660, the scollers (who are taught but not of the lord) and other rude people brake violently upon us into our owne hired house with a malicious spirit and a Cruell intent in their hearts as did appeare by their Cruelly beatinge of us and drawing of our blood and drawing off severall off us but by the haire off the heade, hauinge Regard neither to old or yonge men or women with Child, but did much abuse them by tearing their Cloathes, tumblinge and moileinge diuers in the nasty and loathsome Channels in the streets, and thus did the scollers and the Rude multitude unto us att our meetings. . . . Upon the 20th of the same month, the disordered Scollers, which is a shame to their several tutors

who found themselves with the worst of men Came in with one of the Constables who came under a pretence to search for Arms and searched some of us and found a bible in a friend's pocket but noe armes. . . . Heare all may see what moudie waters this fountayne of Cambridge streams forth."

The hired house mentioned probably belonged to William Brasier, a shoemaker, who seems to have been a leading Cambridge Quaker at this date. More than once he suffered the loss of all his goods for conscience' sake. Sometimes his very bedding was taken away, and he was obliged to sleep on hard boards. In the episcopal visitation of Holy Trinity, 1685, there is probably a reference to the same man, which suggests a mild retaliation. "The Tanner (a Dissenter) hangs Skins on ye Church walls"!

But in spite of cruel persecution the Quakers remained loyal to their principles. Meetings were established in several of the smaller towns and villages of the county. There was a gathering at Ely under the very shadow of the great Cathedral, and at Wisbech the Quakers were fairly numerous. It was here that Mary Stuart, one of the most pathetic and attractive figures of early Quakerism, lived her lonely consecrated life. The first mention of Cambridge in the Minute-book for the Quarterly Meeting is terse but significant: 1670. "Cambridge. Most Friends in prison"!

VI.

BUNYAN AT GAMLINGAY.

"My Mercy was to light upon a Wife whose Father was counted godly. This Woman and I, though we came together as poor might be, (not having so much household stuff as a Dish or spoon betwixt us both), yet this she had for her part, 'The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven' and 'The Practice of Piety' which her Father had left her when he died."

Grace Abounding.

John Bunyan is essentially a Bedfordshire hero, but he was often in Cambridgeshire, and perhaps owed more than has been sometimes supposed to this county. No doubt he visited Cambridge on several occasions. "Vanity Fair," held in a town "that is lighter than vanity," could only have been described by one who had seen, and perhaps preached at, Stourbridge Fair. Bunyan tells us in *Grace Abounding* "When I went first to preach the Word abroad, the Doctors and Priests of the country did open wide against me," and we may be sure some of these "doctors" belonged to Cambridge. There is a story of an encounter between Bunyan and a University man on a road near the town. The scholar asked how Bunyan dared to preach, not having the original scriptures. In reply, Bunyan wished to know if the scholar, on his side, possessed the actual copies written by prophets

and apostles. "No, but I know them to be true copies of the originals." "And I," said Bunyan, "believe the English Bible to be a true copy also." Upon which, we are told, the University man went his way.

At Melbourn, a visit from Bunyan is said to have led to the conversion of a Cambridge scholar, W. Bedford, afterwards the founder of Congregationalism at Royston. This is the account in a narrative of 1700: "And the people being gathered together in the Churchyard, a Cambridge scholar, and none of the soberest of them either, enquired what was the meaning of that concourse of people (it being upon a week-day), and being told that one, Bunyan, was to preach there, he gave a boy two pence to hold his horse, saying 'He was resolved to hear the Tinker prate.'" But apparently the Tinker prated so successfully that Bedford left Melbourn that day a changed man.

That fascinating character, Mr. Worldly Wiseman—a later addition to *The Pilgrim's Progress*—who resented "weak men meddling with things too high for them," was probably drawn from life, and is not unlike an opponent of Bunyan, Mr. Smith, librarian of Cambridge University. The Cambridge don came into collision with the Tinker in the following way:—A certain David Angier of Toft was accustomed to invite Bunyan to come and preach in his barn, and on one occasion,

1659, the latter was in the middle of his sermon when in walked Mr. Smith, of Christ's College. Bunyan was preaching from 1 Tim. iv, 16, and in the course of his sermon did not hesitate to say bluntly that some of his hearers must be unbelievers, who needed conversion. At the close, amid some confusion, Mr. Smith indignantly remonstrated. What right had a mere layman to preach, and call a company of baptised people unbelievers? Apparently the discussion waxed warm, and on his return to Cambridge the librarian was not altogether satisfied that he had displayed his learning to the best advantage. For a few weeks afterwards he published "A letter to Mr. E. of Toft, four miles from Cambridge": "Since Mr. E. would not hear him in the barn, nor suffer his daughters to stay, he will now write part of what he meant to say."

Mr. Smith had already made himself objectionable by interfering with the Cambridge Quakers, and it was against him a Quaker pamphlet, with a most belittling title, was directed, *The Key of Knowledge not found in the University Library*! So now that very chivalrous Baptist, Henry Denne, came forward, and in *The Quaker no Papist* defended the Quakers from the ridiculous charges of Mr. Smith, and at the same time put in a word on behalf of Bunyan. The book is a noble defence of the principle of toleration. "You

seem," he says, in answer to Mr. Smith, "to be angry with the Tinker because he strives to mend souls as well as kettles and pans. The main drift of your letter is to prove that none may preach except they be sent." In Denne's opinion it is sufficient that the congregation at Bedford had called the Tinker to preach the gospel, and he asks some pertinent questions on the subject. "Some shipwrakt men swimming to an island find there many inhabitants, to whom they preach; the heathen hearing are converted, and walk together in love, praising the Lord; whether the preaching of these men were a sin? Secondly, whether it be not lawful for this congregation to choose to themselves pastors, governors, teachers, etc.? Thirdly, whether this congregation may not find some fitting men full of Faith and the Holy Ghost to preach to other unbelieving brethren?"

There is no doubt that Bunyan preached in many of the villages of Cambridgeshire, and in 1672 he took out licences for services in the houses of Luke Astwood at "Gamlinghay," and of John Waite at Toft.

Some of the records of the Church meeting at Gamlingay, written in Bunyan's own hand, have been preserved:—

1672. "Gamlingay, the 31st of the 8th month. The desire of Sister Behemont to walke in fellowship with us was propounded and (she) was received at the next Church meeting."

1673. "At a Church meeting at Gamlingay the 18th of the 8th month, was cast out of the Church the wife of our brother Witt, for railling and other wicked practises. Concluded that some days be set apart for humiliation, with fasting, and prayer to God because of som disorders among som of the congregation; specially for that som have run into debt, more than they can satisfie, to the great dishonor of God and scandall of religion."

1674. "At a Church meeting holden at Gamlingay the 18th of the 3rd month was our sister Londay withdrawn from. The causes were, for that she had withdrawn communion from the saints, had despised gifts in the Church, had taught her children to play at cards, and remained impenitent after several admonitions."

To the first minute quoted, there belongs a curious romance in Bunyan's life concerning Sister Behemont, or Agniss Behemont, as he inscribes her name in the Church roll.

In the village of Edworth, on the Bedfordshire border, there lived a farmer named John Behemont (Beamont). He was a widower, and his unmarried daughter Agnes, now in her twenty-first year, kept house for him. The family was attached to the Dissenters, and the father had more than once been deeply impressed by Bunyan's preaching. "Some time before," says Agnes, "my father had heard him

preach God's Word, and heard him with a broken heart, ... and afterwards would cry to the Lord in secret, as well as I." But by the time that Agnes joined Bunyan's Church her father's enthusiasm had cooled, and indeed he had come to regard the Tinker with actual dislike. In February, 1674, Agnes wished to attend a Church meeting at Gamlingay, and obtained her father's reluctant permission. Early one morning she crossed the road to her married brother's house in order to travel in his company. But an unexpected difficulty presented itself. The servant with whom it was arranged Agnes should ride did not arrive, and the one horse which could be spared from the farm was to carry her brother and his wife, pillion-wise, to the meeting. Suddenly Bunyan himself rode up, and was asked if he would kindly allow Agnes to ride with him. Bunyan knew of the father's hostility, and hesitated. "Your father will be grievous angry," said he, "if I should." But the roads at this season of the year were impassable on foot, and Bunyan at length yielded to the maid's entreaties.

As they rode away old John Behemont caught a glimpse of his daughter from a distant field. Mad with fury, he shouted to her to stop, but Bunyan and his companion were too far away to hear the cries of the enraged parent, and soon they were out of sight. The father vowed he would never forgive his child, and on her return

Agnes found the door of her home bolted against her. A voice from within made it a condition of opening the door that she should give up all connection with Bunyan and the Baptists. Agnes spent the cold February night in a neighbouring barn, and next morning, as her father still remained obdurate, went across to her brother's house. Here she remained till the following Sunday, when at last she yielded to her father's commands and returned home. On Tuesday, John Behemont, who was apparently in the best of health, died suddenly.

Agnes had to suffer severely from the mischievous reports of evil-minded neighbours. A clergyman had seen Agnes and Bunyan riding together to Gamlingay, and spread a scandalous story at Baldock Market. And a neighbouring lawyer named Farrow, whose offer of marriage Agnes had recently rejected, declared that Agnes had poisoned her father, and Bunyan had assisted her. As a result of these stories the funeral was actually deferred for a time and the unfortunate Agnes bitterly persecuted. "I did not know," she writes, "how far God might suffer this man and the devil to go." All her anxiety was on behalf of Bunyan. "It also troubled me to think that in case I suffered, another as innocent as myself must suffer too: but the Lord knew our innocency in this affair, both in thought, word, and deed."

After careful investigation the charges were found to be quite untrue, and the doctors showed that Behemont had died a perfectly natural death. Agnes Behemont lived on to a ripe old age at Highgate, and was buried at Hitchin, where an inscription to her memory still remains.

It was probably Bunyan's unfortunate share in this episode which led him to insert in *Grace Abounding* a strong vindication of himself against the calumnies of malicious foes. "I bind these lies and slanders to me as an ornament; it belongs to my Christian profession to be vilified, slandered, reproached and reviled; and since all this is nothing else, as my God and my conscience do bear me witness, I rejoice in reproaches for Christ's sake."

VII.

THE ACT OF UNIFORMITY AND THE VILLAGE CHURCHES.

"Noe Dissenters: many Sluggards."—*Report of Episcopal Visitation, 1685.*

One of the earliest products of the Restoration and the downfall of Puritanism was the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662. The passing of this Act marks the birth of Nonconformity as we know it to-day. In the preamble of the statute there is a reference to an Act of Uniformity under Elizabeth. "And yet this notwithstanding a great number of People in divers parts of the Realm, following their own sensuality and living without knowledge and due Fear of God, do willfully and schismatically abstain and refuse to come to their Parish Churches." This description of Nonconformity still remains on the statute-book of the land. The Act made a revised Prayer-book the only legal service-book in England, and all ministers were obliged to use it in their churches after the feast of St. Bartholomew. All ministers, professors, and tutors in the Universities were required to subscribe a declaration of obedience to the King, and all orders, save those conferred by the bishops, were declared illegal. For the

Church of England the Act of Uniformity was really the completion of the Reformation, and was far more the natural outcome of a long conflict between two rival religious ideals than Nonconformists popularly suppose. But it was in direct violation of the honourable understanding into which Charles II. had entered at the Restoration. And on St. Bartholomew's Day about one-fifth of the clergy, rather than comply with its provisions, resigned their livings and became Nonconformists.

This was a great disaster for the English Church. The expelled ministers included some of her best and wisest men, such as Richard Baxter and John Howe. For the first time the Church found herself confronted, not by scattered bands of sectaries, but by organised dissent. A common suffering united the most diverse elements in English religious life. Presbyterians, who hated Baptists; Puritans, who disliked schism; Independents, who had no wish to be identified with Quakers; all found themselves in the same camp outside the Church. And the principle of religious liberty, which seemed at the Restoration to be thrust into the back-ground, was once more brought to the front.

The effects of the Act were seen immediately in Cambridgeshire. Several clergymen who held livings in the county were obliged to become Nonconformists. Robert Wilson, of Over, left his parish and settled as a music teacher in

Cambridge, where be became notorious as "an arch-beggar for the Nonconformists." Bradshaw, of Willingham, "a Boanerges well-adapted to the people of Willingham, whom he found very profane and ignorant. . . . left many good people and a very good living for the ease of his conscience." Hunt, of Sutton, for the same reason, resigned his living and turned farmer. He is an interesting personality. "He went with his family to the public church, and instead of striving for the uppermost place, he chose the lowest, though the chief pew belonged to his near relations." He was such a strict Sabbatarian that on Sunday "not a child was suffered to look out into the street without real occasion." It is a testimony to the real worth of the man that two of his sons afterwards entered the Dissenting ministry.

More important than the evictions from county livings are those from the University. Men of all ranks and conditions suffered, including the Masters of Trinity Hall, Pembroke, and Caius, and John Ray of Trinity, the distinguished naturalist. In a preface to a book on the relation of religion to science, Ray says: "Not being permitted to serve the Church with my tongue in preaching, I know not but it may be my duty to serve it with my hand in writing." We should like to have met some of the members of Magdalene who suffered at this time. The Master himself, "a person of great piety and an

accomplished gentleman, tho' it must be owned he was not always right in his head": Mr. More, whose difficulty was the Athanasian Creed, and who declared that "he could not in conscience doom all those to hell who were there damned;" and Mr. Wood, "a close student, excessively modest and timourous—one of the most helpless men in the world." "He had," says the writer, "no dwelling-place on earth, but I trust hath one in heaven."

From the point of view of local Nonconformity, the most important evictions are those of Holcroft of Clare, Oddy and Corbyn of Trinity, and James Day of Emmanuel. There are records of Oddy ministering to congregations at Willingham and Cottenham, where his preaching was so vigorous that people walked twenty miles to hear him. To-day he is chiefly remembered through his impromptu reply to the Cambridge wit—

"Good day, Mr. Oddy,
Pray, how fares your body?
Methinks you look damnably thin.

That sir's your mistake,
'Tis for righteousness' sake,
Damnation's the fruit of your sin."

James Day was a student of Emmanuel, but there is no evidence that he proceeded to take a degree. He was "a pious and worthy" man, but was "silenced" as one of Holcroft's assistants. In 1672 he applied in vain for a license to preach at the house of Elizabeth Pettit in Cambridge, but obtained one "in a place called the Kitchin,

with rooms belonging thereto in the High Dyke at March." He was evidently a well-known figure among Cambridge Nonconformists; as late as 1712 a local Church book speaks of receiving a member "of Mr. Day's Church." In 1682 it appears that Holcroft and Oddy "sett down the Rev. Mr. Day pastor" of a congregation at Wenden, near Saffron Walden. A quaint account of the persecution of this congregation and the attempt to capture a member—possibly James Day himself—has been preserved. "On this person making his appearance, and being challenged as to his name, he replied, 'My name is Hepzibah, and I dwell in the land of Beulah.' This answer so irritated one of the informers who were present that he discharged a volley of oaths at his victim; but his companions, thinking they were talking to a lunatic, insisted on letting him go." Samuel Corbyn ex-chaplain of Trinity, played but a small part in local Nonconformity. Unlike Day, he obtained a license for the house of Elizabeth Pettit in Green street, but soon afterwards we find him licensed to teach in "his house near Aldersgate Street, London."

Far more important in the annals of our Churches than the names of Day or Corbyn is that of Francis Holcroft. He has been called, not unjustly, 'the apostle' of Cambridge Nonconformity. In his student days Holcroft came under the influence of a clergyman, Mr. Jephcot,

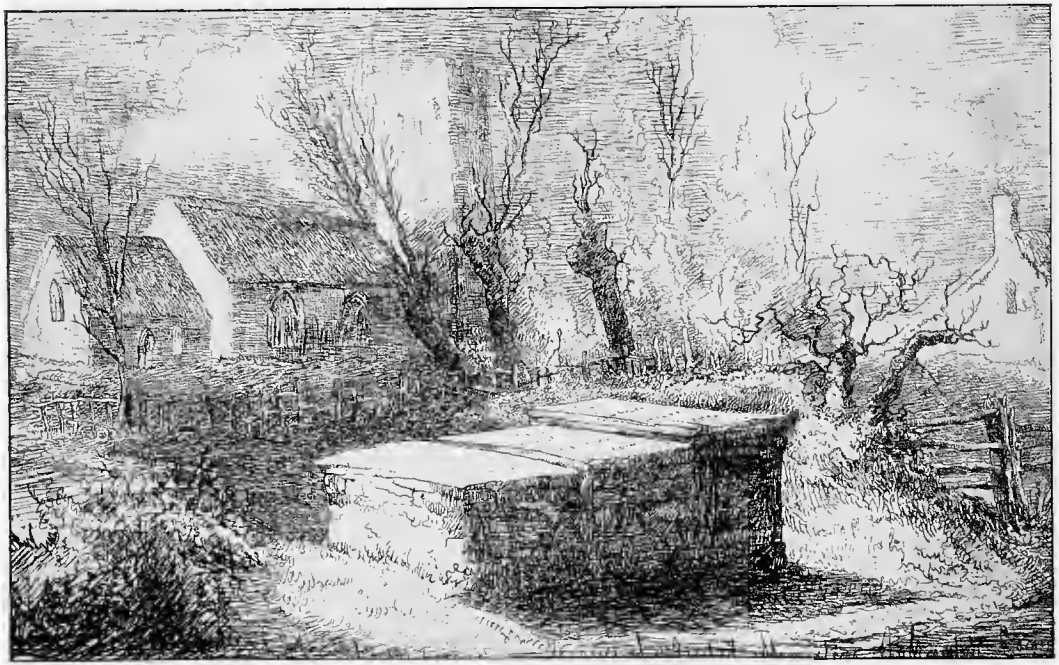
of Great Swaffham, who encouraged him to preach. As he sat in his rooms overlooking Clare gateway he noticed that a horse was brought regularly to the college on Sundays, and often led away without a rider. This was because one of the fellows who held the living of Littlington was too lazy, after a bout of drunkenness, to fulfil his duties. Holcroft volunteered his services, which were accepted, and thus began the ministry of a preacher whose voice was soon to be heard in most of the villages of Cambridgeshire. In the town, Holcroft is said to have discoursed to people in the King's Yard from his college rooms. But his chief labours were at Bassingbourn, where eventually he formed the Church which became the mother of several independent congregations throughout the neighbouring districts.

"The Lord's hand was seen in that day in calling severell of the yong schollers in the unifarciti which did preach about in the countri towns as mister Oddi at Meldred, and mister Ekins at Chishell, and mister Ponder of Whadon, and God's servant (Holcroft) being ficksed for the rule of God's hous, was soone set apart pastor by Mister Stalomes and soome others, which I have forgot, then being feri yong (Richard Conder), but this I remember, they kept the day and all the night after with great joy and singin. . . . I remember that my mother was one of the first almost that was out

to lay the foundation, but my father stood out a pretti whill and did not join with them on account of the covenant . . . . but the Lord brought him and leet him to see into it afterwards." The covenant used by these early Dissenters was as follows:—

"We do, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the awful Crowned King of Sion, and in the presence of the holy angels . . . solemnly give up ourselves to the Lord and with one another, in the observation of all gospel ordinances, and the discharge of all relative duties in the Church of God and elsewhere." Holcroft suffered at times from severe melancholy through "the headiness of some of his people who turned preachers," but whether this refers or not to the "yong schollers" above mentioned we cannot say. Holcroft himself was no mere enthusiast. "A comprehensive knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ was his greatest glory."

Holcroft's preaching was not allowed to go unchecked, and in 1663 he was placed in Cambridge Gaol, where he was detained for nine years. Happily, the gaoler, Mr. Prophet, was a secret sympathiser, and allowed his prisoner to go forth late on Saturday night and preach in the neighbouring villages. In these nocturnal services, held in barns and woods, several of the country Churches claim to have originated. It was during his imprisonment in Cambridge Gaol that Holcroft wrote his book, *A Word to*



THE GRAVES AT OAKINGTON.

the Saints from the Watch-tower. On his release in 1672, Holcroft obtained with Oddy a license to 'teach' in the house of Job Hall in Bridge Street. While discoursing in the house of one, Thurlow, "The scholars interrupted the service, and came with a drum into the meeting, so that 'God's servant' could not speak, and soon he was put into prison again and great persecution was upon the Church." This time Holcroft was taken from Cambridge and imprisoned in Fleet Street, London. It is good to learn that here he was befriended by his old college chum Tillotson. Crowds flocked to hear the great preacher in prison. But the latter "shrank to a skeleton," and suffered from an illness which seems to have slightly affected his mind. Eventually he was allowed to return to Cambridgeshire, and died at Triplow, 1692, full of confidence. As a contemporary said, "God did not let him die in the dark." He was buried at Oakington in a plot of unconsecrated ground just outside the churchyard beside his friend Oddy. There a grave-stone still testifies to the work and worth of these two Nonconformist heroes, and of Oasland, the son of an ejected minister.

"Some Constellations were in Holcroft seen,
Perfections take from one, then from another,
They all did Center in this blessed Brother.
With what great Scripture plainness did he Preach!
With what Majestick boldness did he Teach!
Cambridge! Christ lent him for a time to thee;
A Pattern for thy Preachers he should be."

One of Holcroft's converts was Mary Churchman, a girl of eighteen, who had taken a delight in ridiculing the Dissenters. We can see from her spiritual autobiography how difficult it was to be a disciple of Holcroft. "My father was then high constable, and had an order from the justices to return all the names of those who frequented the meetings. This made it a hard thing for his own daughter to be a fanatic, which was what he could not bear. And this also increased my difficulty in getting out on the Lord's day, which notwithstanding I sometimes did, and have walked ten or twelve miles to a meeting. If my father at any time understood where I was going he spent the day in nothing but oaths and curses, and resolves to murder me. My mother, though an enemy to fanatics, would frequently send a servant to meet me before I could reach home to tell me not to appear till my father was gone to bed. And I have often hid myself in a woodstack where I have seen him pass by with a naked knife in his hand declaring he would kill me before he slept." For preaching herself at Meldreth Mary Churchman was turned out of her home, and subjected to many privations. Eventually she obtained employment in the home of a Dissenter, and thus describes the visit of some persecutors: "Mr. B. and Mr. Holcroft were asleep in a private arbour. I ran with some difficulty and awoke them, but they made

their escape through the hedges, but as I returned the officers surprised me. They went and found some slips of their clothes on the hedges which made them roar like bloodhounds, after which they came and seized a whole house of goods." At length the father's heart was softened and Mary returned to her home, where she met with a warm welcome. "At supper there was not a mouthful eaten but with tears." Her father even promised her a horse and rider to go as often as she liked to hear Oddy at Toft. Her influence eventually brought about the conversion of the whole family.

The men of Cambridgeshire have from the earliest times been Dissenters by temperament. Even under the Tudors the Isle of Ely possessed an evil reputation for harbouring sectaries. The "Family of Love"—not actual Separatists—had adherents in the county, especially at Balsham, and Strype describes a sect in the Isle of Ely, 1573, which, to judge from some of the expressions he uses, might be a company of early Cambridge Quakers.

"They maintain that every man may without lawful callings leap into the Church of God, and as his furious brain moveth him preach and interpret . . . . they meet in private conventicles with the doors shut upon them, intromitting no man but him that will join with them in their mysteries as they call them. Their preacher is some one of their

company; a private man called and moved as is above said."

Where precisely these people held their meetings we cannot say, but it may well have been not far from Waterbeach when we recall the following record of 1574!

"Waterbeache. The chancel is in great decaye and yf it be not repayred in verie short time it will be utterlye spoyled and we have oftentimes complayned of it but noe remedye is had therefor. My lord of Ely is proprietor thereof (In another hand). It is my lord of Elye's charge to do it."

Cambridgeshire, then, by a long tradition, was a district where we might expect the rapid rise of Nonconformist Churches in the latter part of the seventeenth century. At no place in the county was Henry Denne more favourably received than at Wisbech, and in 1672 we find Thomas Taylor, an Anabaptist, licensed to preach in the house of Joshua Johnson. In 1690 the Baptists were able to build their own meeting-house, and appoint their first pastor, Mr. Ricks. At March, in 1672, Edward Smith, an Anabaptist, was licensed to teach in the house of Thomas Meeres. At Wilbraham, John Denne, son of Henry Denne, taught in his own house, and impressed his father's theology upon his followers. At Guyhern, some members of the Rowell Church formed a congregation and chose as their pastor David Culye, in 1693. He

was a Huguenot, and when the authorities transported him to get him out of the way he proved such a nuisance on the ship off Lynn, singing so lustily hymns of his own composition, that the captain was only too glad to put him on shore again. In quite another part of the county, high on the hills at Croydon, a farmer named Richard Conder, inspired by Holcroft's preaching, became minister of a little flock. He was an ancestor of Josiah Conder the hymn-writer, and grandfather of John Conder, afterwards an Independent minister in Cambridge. Little John Conder was baptised by his grandfather in 1714, at a time when an Act of Parliament had been passed to hinder Nonconformists from educating their children in their own faith, and the old farmer kissed him very tearfully, saying "Who knows what sad days these little eyes are likely to see!" But two months later, with the accession of the house of Hanover, religious liberty was for ever established in England. So John Conder as an old man loved to tell the story of his baptism and add, "For three score years now 'these eyes' have seen nothing follow me and the Churches but goodness and mercy!"

Melbourn has always been a stronghold of Nonconformity, and this is partly due to a sturdy Anabaptist family of the seventeenth century named Metcalf. Benjamin Metcalf the elder led the villagers when they gathered under

the great elm tree by the Church to resist the imposition of ship-money under Charles I. "And they fell upon the Sheriff's men with stones, and staves, and hedgestakes, and forks, and beat and wounded divers of them, and did drive them out of the highway into a woman's yard for their safety. And were forced for saving of their lives to get out of the town a back way, which notwithstanding some 30 or 40 able men and boys pursued them above a quarter of a mile, stoning them, and driving the bailiffs into a ditch, where some of their horses stuck fast." Benjamin Metcalf the younger was as independent a man as his father. When little more than a youth he rode forth to join Cromwell's regiment near Royston, very bold and brave, as the story goes, when he remembered Ursula Gray at home. Later we find him leading a congregation of Anabaptists in his own house at Melbourn, where he died 1689. Perhaps he owed his principles to his mother as well as his father, for "Widow Metcalfe" was convicted 1665 for not taking the sacraments, and 1671 owed as much as £60 in fines for refusing to go to the Parish Church!

The episcopal visitation for 1685 contains notes showing the position of Dissent in the various villages before the Toleration Act of 1689, and in some cases these give food for reflection. Balsham, "2 Quakers, 2 Anabaptists, good school dame constant at church. Another,

a Fanatic, never comes." Barton, "The font foul, noe hole in it . . . they use a Bason or rather a black nasty Dish . . . one Quaker, some unbaptised" (!). Bassingbourn, "Noe Dissenters: many Sluggards." Chatteris, "The parish abounds with Quakers. . . . The Church to be kept always cleane." Downham, "Two or Three stubborne Quakers." Elsworth, "Noe Dissenters, 2 sermons on Sundays." Gamlingay, "About 40 unbaptised followers of Cummin ye Tinker." Grantchester, "Never a Dissenter." Hildersham (an ideal village), "Noe alehouse, noe Separatist. All come well to Church." Histon, "The Church windows to be mended . . . 3 female Dissenters." Lollworth, "One Dissenter of Holcroft's, but Shees Excommunicate." Oakington, "The most scandalous Parish and worst in ye Diocese, for ye people are most vile. A Fanatick Schoolmaster." Orwell, "Many Dissenters, about 30 Holdcrofts and Oddyes Disciples." Over, "The people lazy, heedless, noe Conventicles." Shelford, "2 or 3 Dissenters Excomm." Tadlow, "A pittiful torn Bible. Noe Dissenter." Trumpington, "One Stiff Dissenter."

It has to be remembered, in reading this report, that the parish churches in the seventeenth century were sometimes used for secular purposes. But this fact does not excuse their condition, which was more lamentable than our quotations suggest. The slackness of the local

clergy was a justification for the rise of Nonconformist churches.

In 1689, the Toleration Act of William and Mary gave some recognition of the rights of Dissenters, and before the close of the century meeting-houses were erected in several places in the county. But the escape from actual persecution was not altogether a blessing for the Dissenters. There is no doubt that after the first years of the eighteenth century the Cambridgeshire Nonconformists shared in the general decay of religion throughout the land. The sons and daughters of men who had suffered as followers of Holcroft gave up their principles and returned to the Church of England. The zeal and earnestness which had characterised the Dissenters of the seventeenth century seemed to have been lost. And this spiritual deadness was closely related to a general lowering of the moral standard. What was needed was a new baptism of the Holy Spirit among Anglicans and Dissenters alike. The bestowal of this gift was the result of the great Evangelical Revival under Wesley. And it was to the preaching of men like John Berridge, who had come under the influence of the revival, that many of the Baptist Churches of the county owed their resuscitation. The local Baptists, as we shall see when we come to deal with Robinson, are more closely connected with the Methodists than is popularly supposed.

Your much Obliged
and affectionate Servt
for Christs sake
J Bennage

John Berridge has often been ridiculed as an eccentric individual, but his importance in the history of village Nonconformity has not been sufficiently recognised. Like Holcroft, he was a Fellow of Clare College, where he was nicknamed "the saint of the Lord." In 1749 he accepted the curacy of Stapleford, near Cambridge, but, finding his work a failure, 1755, left to become vicar of Everton. It was then that Berridge was converted and changed the tone and matter of his sermons. "As soon as I preached Jesus Christ, and faith in His blood, then believers were added to the Church continually, then people flocked from all parts to hear the glorious sound of the Gospel." Thousands visited the great preacher at Everton, and he himself journeyed through most of the villages of Cambridgeshire proclaiming his gospel. The bishop tried to check him, but he refused to be daunted. Rough men interrupted his sermons on the village greens, but he did not hesitate. Houses and barns were rented for preaching, lay preachers were maintained in all directions, and the worthy vicar's income was spent in spreading the gospel. Hosts of friends, including Robert Robinson, delighted in the witty and quaint sayings of this remarkable man. Berridge remained a bachelor all his life, giving his reason in a letter. "It seemed highly needful to ask advice of the Lord. So kneeling down on my knees before a table with a Bible between

my hands I besought the Lord to give me a direction." And the first text which caught his eye was Jeremiah xvi. 2! His journeyings in the villages entailed many hardships. "Long rides and miry roads in sharp weather! Cold houses to sit in with moderate fuel, and three or four children roaring or rocking about you! Lumpy beds to lie on, and too short for the feet, with stiff blankets like boards for a covering! Rise at five in the morning to preach; at seven breakfast on poor tea; at eight mount a horse with boots never cleaned and then ride home praising God for all His mercies!" But Berridge knew the secret of the victorious life, and when friends commiserated with him in the loneliness of old age, was wont to reply, "Lord, if I have Thy presence and love, *that* sufficeth."

VIII.

SPIES AND CONVENTICLES.

"Inferior sorte, and above halfe are womenkinde."—
Conventicle Report, 1669.

"Religion may accept, without a blush, the aid of the purest and most gentle portion of the human race."—*Gibbon.*

The Act of Uniformity brought untold suffering to many faithful ministers. Through the Conventicle Act of 1664 the persecution of the State was extended to the laity. It made any person who attended a service of Dissenters liable to a heavy fine or imprisonment. For the second offence the penalties were made more severe, and the third offence might involve transportation beyond the seas. In the very next year a conventicle was discovered at Widow Wilson's house, St. Andrew's Street, where a hundred and five persons were present, and this was the result. April 14th, 1665. "Dac (the teacher) committed to ye Tolbooth, was taken in ye garden 11 o'clock that night: 80 women in 100 at least went out of Widow Wilson's yard by Emmanuel Field. Widow Wilson's maid said to Mr. Finch, tobacco-seller, the informer, that if hee had heard butt how heavenly Mr. Dac spoke to them that evening

he would have thought him a heavenly man." In October of the same year another Act was passed, which completed the machinery of persecution. By this "Five Mile Act" ministers "not ordained according to the form of the Church of England" were prohibited (under penalty of very heavy fines), from coming within five miles of any town in which they had previously taught or preached. The measure was a cruel one, for it drove the Nonconformists out of the towns, and away from their friends, and sometimes forced them to leave the occupations by which they were gaining a living. In 1667, the Conventicle Act expired, and in the next year or two there are notices of several conventicles in Cambridge and the district around. In All Saint's parish there was one at the house of William Brasier consisting of "about ten Quakers." In St. Michael's, 1668, there was one consisting of a hundred people. "At ye Widow Petit's house, meane sorte and inconsiderable persons." At Linton, 1669, there was a conventicle "At ye house of John Harvey every Tuesday, 30 at most, Inferior sorte and above halfe are womenkinde." At Wilbraham, there were "Anabaptists 20 or 30, all of meane sorte, in ye house of Moses Crab, a Water-Miller." At Fulbourne, "At ye house of Tho. Mascall, Labouring man, Anabaptists, Poore people, women and Girles most." Their teacher was Edward Hancock, "a meane farmer." At

Trumpington there was a considerable gathering "In the barne of Tho. Cambridge, 400 or 500 as is sayd from several places. Most of them of ye common vulgar sorte and more women than men." One Smith, of Royston, was their teacher.

These references are not exactly complimentary, but they show what a brave part "women and poore Girles" played in the early history of our churches, when Dissent meant much more than a mere loss of social position. Here are one or two quotations from the Over Register which will help to explain what we mean. 1672, "A child of Cranford's, an Anabaptist, buried in a corner of ye Churchyard by themselves without ye minister." 1677, "Mary the wife, and Mary the daughter, of Edward Rooke, buiried in ye close without ye Christian buirial."

In 1670, a second Conventicle Act was passed, "the quintessence of arbitrary malice." By this measure, if two witnesses appeared before a Justice of the Peace and swore to having seen anyone over sixteen years of age at a conventicle of more than five persons the Justice might fine the culprit without seeing him or hearing his defence. Of the fines, which, in the case of a large meeting would amount to a nice sum, one-third was to be paid to informers. Hence there were many spies, who, like Mr. Finch above-mentioned, added to their income by discovering

conventicles and reporting them to the authorities. There were informers like Audey at Meldreth, and Stephen Perry in Cambridge, who made quite a lucrative business out of the early Nonconformist conscience. Stephen Perry was apparently a servant of St. John's College. On one occasion we find him surprising a meeting at Widow Briggs' at Cottenham; another time he is as far as Earith with his boon companions, "who having been in long season in an Alehouse, came into the meeting like madmen, threatening and pulling people, not regarding either age or sex, to the hurt of some women present."

A curious pamphlet, published in 1675, is directed against these informers. It is entitled *Newes from Cambridge, or a Brief Relation of the Wicked Proceedings of Three Informers, viz.: Stephen Perry, Tinker; Edward Wallis, Cobbler; and Christopher Harrod, Labourer, who have informed and falsely sworn against many of his peaceful subjects in and about Cambridge.* It describes the Dissenters as suffering joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and is especially bitter against Perry ".... This Notorious retch, in his False swearing against divers for meeting at Mr. Wilson's, in St. Andrew's parish." In 1670 an experience of this informer at Toft led to an amusing incident. It seems that Perry hoped to surprise a meeting in the house of John Waite,

the friend of Bunyan. Unfortunately for the greedy informer, only four persons were present —not enough to make the meeting an offence against law. So eventually he proceeded to another house, that of William Eversden. "Having seen through the casement a companie riseing up, we required him to open his door. He refused, saying we were a couple of rogues come to rob his house, and he then returned into his house. In the meanwhile we saw the number of 15 persons conveyed out of a back door. Afterwards he came and opened his door and bid us come in." Of course the house was empty, and Perry returned to Cambridge to lay a complaint before Sir Thomas Slater, a Justice of the Peace. But the latter apparently no more enjoyed fining Nonconformists than a magistrate to-day enjoys passing sentence on Passive Resisters. So Sir Thomas Slater again and again found himself too busy to see Perry, till the three months' limit which was allowed for the disposing of such business was passed. Perry was indignant, and still more enraged when the tables were turned upon him and he found himself arrested for a malicious prosecution. "William Eversden," he writes, "went to Mr. Bryan Kitchinman, an attourney (whose daughter, Dorothy Kitchinman, hath been taken in a meeting, always a neglecter of Divine Service, and he himself an encourager of the ffanaticks to trouble us); who granted

him a writ to arrest us." Realising that he was caught in a trap, Perry turned to the Master of St. John's, Dr. Turner, and complained bitterly, saying, that his zeal on behalf of Church and State deserved to be brought to the notice of the King. Dr. Turner, without meaning anything, tried to soothe the baffled informer, but Perry interpreted his words as entirely in his own favour, and went from the Master's Chamber to brag to the undergraduates of how his name was to be mentioned to Royalty. Now a certain undergraduate of St. John's, Lewis Maidwell, thought that a humiliation would be good for the soul of this college servant, and resolved to play a trick upon him. Bold hoaxes are still not unknown in Cambridge, but this student of the seventeenth century had plenty of audacity. He actually counterfeited the signatures of the King and Secretary of State and wrote a letter "to our trusty and well beloved Stephen Perry," praising the informer's loyalty and directing him to show the letter to the Mayor of Cambridge, "that he may vindicate you with his authority in your office." The worthy Mayor, on receiving the letter, proceeded to Dr. Turner, who at once suspected a hoax, and recognised the hand writing of Lewis Maidwell. The student acknowledged his guilt, but the Mayor did not appreciate undergraduate humour, so the letter with the youth's confession was de-

spatched by the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Breton, Master of Emmanuel, to the Secretary of State. The Master of St. John's took care at the same time to write a letter saying all that could be said in defence of his pupil. "His impudence is inexcusable, but we are all satisfied there is no malicious designe, but pure roguery. This I must needs say for him. He has bin studious and inoffensive in all his carriage except this great misdemeanour, and he is one of excellent faculty. He comes to us from the top of Westminster Schools, and thought this but a Westminster trick, not consideringe the consequence." Happily, the Clerk of the Council who received the letter was also an old Westminster boy, and the whole matter was hushed up.

In spite of informers and spies Nonconformity yet held its own in Cambridge. In 1672 a Declaration of Indulgence allowed licenses to be granted to persons and places for the carrying on of religious worship not specifically Anglican. In Cambridge licenses were granted for meetings in the houses of Bryan Kitchinman, Downham Yeomans, Richard Thurlow, Lancellot Hooper, Job Hall in Bridge Street, and Elizabeth Pettit in Green Street. Samuel Corbyn, ex-Chaplain of Trinity, was one of the teachers of those Dissenters whom this brave woman sheltered in her house. She deserves to be held in high honour by Nonconformists, for

one of the earliest Cambridge Dissenting Churches seems to have grown out of meetings held in her house. The first minister was James Taylor, an old Caius man, and author of one or two books, *Jacob Wrestling and Prevailing*, and *The True Light*. A successor of Taylor's in the eighteenth century was the famous James Duchal; and it was in Green Street in 1781 that the very entertaining preacher, Johnny Stittle, began his ministry. Byron alludes to this illiterate genius, who was a convert of John Berridge. And everyone knows stories concerning Stittle's scorn of mere learning, and his reputed saying to his undergraduate hearers, "D'ye think Powle (St. Paul) knew Greek?"

The Indulgence of 1672 was short-lived, and the Conventicles were again subjected to persecution. But in 1685 there were clearly many well- known Dissenters in Cambridge parishes. In All Hallowes, "Some Dissenters, several Quakers, one Muggletonian"; Gt. St. Maries, "3 or 4 Dissenters, very obstinate"; St. Giles', "Some Dissenters, Anabaptists"; St. Peter's, "Several Dissenters, Independents; A schooldame a Fanatick"; Round Church, "Some ex-communicated Dissenters"; Trinity, "Many Dissenters. One Margaret Love, a Dissenting school-dame." We have already met with "the wife of Love" in the account of Denne's visit to Cambridge. And there existed till lately this

JOSEPH HUSSEY

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inscription on a tombstone in St. Peter's Churchyard:

> "Margaret Love, a widow aged sixty-seven,
> And I'm assured she's gone to heaven.
> Who in her lifetime was a school dame,
> And one of the best of that name."

In 1687, James II. issued a Declaration of Indulgence for which some of the Cambridge Dissenters were innocent enough to express their gratitude. "We most thankfully acknowledge the goodness of God who did plant so early in your royal breast a principle of moderation and tenderness"! But it was not till the accession of William and Mary, and the passing of the Toleration Act, 1689, that the Nonconformists at last enjoyed liberty to worship in their own way. It is true they were still obliged to subscribe to the Articles and pay tithes and Church rates, but the Act marks a real advance. Nonconformity was no longer an offence against the law, and the Cambridge Dissenters immediately asserted their new rights. In 1689, Thomas Cowlinge was sent as the local representative to a general Baptist Assembly meeting in London. About the same time the Presbyterians, who had already purchased a piece of land on Hog Hill (Downing Place), erected a meeting-house, and in 1691 called their first pastor, Joseph Hussey. The "Great Meeting," as it was called, was vested in six trustees, including "the aged and honoured" Robert Wilson, formerly vicar of Over. The

building was to be used "as a place of religious worship by Protestant Dissenters," and no doctrinal limitations were imposed. Indeed, before long there was quite a number of Anabaptists in the congregation, *e.g.* John Newling of the Free-Will Baptists at Willbraham, who was "wholly knocked down and emptied of himself," on hearing one of Hussey's sermons—according to the preacher! Thomas Dawson, of Fulbourn, "who held arguments for general redemption," and must have found Hussey's Calvinism rather difficult to accept. Richard Redman, of Cottenham, "a very choice young man, and a heavenly soul." Widow Smith, "late of John Bunyan's Church," and surely a Baptist. Mrs. Ellis, whom Hussey describes somewhat tremulously as "a constant hearer . . . . but a great Anabaptist!"

Hussey had been ordained in 1688 by six ministers, one of whom dared not disclose his name or sign the certificate, "shy, because of the cloudiness of the times." He settled as a Presbyterian, but he soon persuaded his people to adopt the more democratic congregational form of Church government, which increased the power of the individual member, and emphasised the declaration of a personal experience of God's dealings for admission to membership. Hussey did a great work in Cambridge, and under his ministry the Church membership increased from seventy-six to one hundred and fifty,

while he is said to have had nearly one thousand followers. We learn from one writer that "scholars do now and then peep into his meeting," and that the preacher "has a great respect for pious men in the Church of England." Hussey held an extravagant form of Calvinism which he impressed upon Cambridge Nonconformity. He believed that no offer of Christ ought to be made to sinners by a preacher, and even such a text as "He shall turn many to righteousness" he interpreted only of turning them to the "imputed," not the imparted, righteousness of Christ. He was the author of several pamphlets which spread his views throughout the country, and of one book which is still read, *The Glory of Christ Unveiled.* In 1721 disputes broke out among the members of the "Great Meeting," and Hussey accepted an invitation to a Church in Petticoat Lane, London.

Nonconformists, though tolerated in Cambridge by law, were not exempt from persecution. In the reign of Anne the bitterest feeling was sometimes excited against them. In 1710 the Vice-Chancellor had to issue the following edict:—

"Whereas I am informed yt divers disorderly persons have threatened to meet in a tumultuous manner on Wednesday ye 8th March and to pull down Mr. Hussey's Meeting House contrary to law: these are therefore strictly to charge and require all scholars whatsoever yt they or any

of you do not presume to assist, abet, or joyn yourselves with any such riotous assemblies in breach of ye peace, and to ye disturbance of ye good government of the University or town of Cambridge, as they will answer ye contrary on their utmost peril."

Early in the next reign a Jacobite mob "pillaged and plundered and almost demolished" the "Great Meeting." In 1738 the University actually issued an edict against conventicles. But this measure was actuated, not by dislike of Nonconformists so much as by fear of an eccentric clergyman, "Orator Henley" (St. John's), at Stourbridge Fair, whose sermons had caused the Bishop of London some uneasiness, especially one thrilling discourse from the fragmentary text in the Book of Revelation: "I saw a great wonder in Heaven—a woman." And there really was some excuse for the anxiety of the Vice-Chancellor, for not long before, Mrs. Drummond, a young Scotch lady who had turned Quaker, preached "to the whole University of Cambridge on Castle Hill"!

Cambridge Nonconformity was not exempt from the general decay of religion throughout the country. And after Hussey's departure the "Great Meeting" fell on evil days, through the divisions and quarrels of the members. The rich folk wished for a Mr. Throgmorton as pastor, while the poorer people desired a Mr. Davis. So the extraordinary arrangement was

made that one should preach in the morning, and the other in the evening. But such a settlement of the dispute could not last long, and in 1720 the wealthy section, "thinking that numbers should yield to money, and as little acquainted, in reality, with liberty, as the episcopalians," refused the pulpit to Davis. The latter was obliged to withdraw, and, with 100 supporters, hired and fitted up a stable and granary in St. Andrew's Parish in a place called Stone Yard. Davis preached here for the first time April 16th, 1721. This is the origin of the St. Andrew's Baptist Church.

But for many years this little company of Dissenters had to undergo fresh trials and difficulties. And not a few of these were due to their own lack of brotherly love. There were further splits and divisions. At last Andrew Harper became minister, and appears to have been very happy with his people. He was succeeded in 1745 by George Simpson, M.A. "He was a North Briton . . . educated at Aberdeen . . . a rigid Baptist of a violent temper; a lord in his Church, a tyrant in his family, and a libertine in his life.". It is hardly surprising to learn that under his regime "the Church, disunited in their tempers, dispirited in their prospects, and low in their circumstances, jangled awhile and then broke up."

The story of these early years is a very sad one. But it needs to be told in full to remind

us that there is a deep truth in the Churchman's taunt of the sin of schism. Such divisions as we have just recorded might well cause the clergymen of the time to look on with contempt. And before we pass on to the triumphs and victories it is good to be humbled by the remembrance of early mistakes and failures. But the dawn was at hand. The little company of Baptists, so disheartened under Simpson's ministry, met together once more and determined to make another effort to secure a suitable pastor. Through that remarkable woman, Mrs. Dutton, of Great Gransden, they heard of a young man of twenty-three, whose preaching was attracting some attention in Norwich. They invited him to preach at Cambridge, and pressed him to accept the pastorate. With a fine modesty he declined again and again for two years on the ground of youth and inexperience. At length in 1761 he yielded to the urgency of the call, and Robert Robinson settled in Cambridge.

IX.

ROBERT ROBINSON.

"Thursday, June 11th. The Church . . . . conferred the pastoral office, the highest honour on earth, on that abandoned outcast boy. (Great God! he records it with tears!)"
Robinson (in an old Church-book).

Robert Robinson was born at Swaffham, in Norfolk, in 1735, amid humble circumstances. His mother was the daughter of a gentleman of property, but she had married beneath her rank, and her husband had deserted her soon after the marriage. However, Mary Robinson was a brave woman, and determined to give her boy the best education possible. With her own hard earnings she was able to maintain him at Scarning Grammar School, where John Norris, founder of the famous professorship at Cambridge, was also educated. The mother dreamed of sending her son eventually to the University, and hoped her rich relatives might assist, but these ambitions had to be given up, and Robinson was apprenticed to a hairdresser in London. It was believed that there was a good opening for the lad in this occupation. But the young apprentice was fonder of reading than of trimming beards. He would be up at four or five in the morning engaged in hard

study, and he was often to be seen returning home at night with old volumes from a second-hand bookseller in a neighbouring street. His master had never engaged such an eccentric apprentice! At this time a great change came over young Robinson. Thus far he had shown no special interest in religion, but one day, quite by chance, he went to hear George Whitefield, as he said afterwards, "to see the folly of the preacher." The text was, "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to the baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" At first Robinson was untouched. But before long the preacher "burst into a flood of tears, lifted up his hands and eyes, and exclaimed 'O my hearers! *the wrath's to come, the wrath's to come*!' These words sank into my heart like lead in the waters. I wept, and when the sermon was ended I retired alone. For days and weeks I could think of nothing else. Those awful words would follow me wheresoever I went.—'The wrath's to come, the wrath's to come.'" For two years and seven months he remained in a state of perplexity and despair, but at length on Tuesday, 10th Dec., 1755, to quote his own great and solemn words, "He found full and free forgiveness through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and glory for ever, Amen."

During these early years Robinson was constantly hearing his "Father in Christ," as he afterwards called Whitefield. His Journal shows the tastes of the youth.

"Thursday. Old Mr. Crookshanks preached a sweet sermon, very awakening; the oldest preachers are most thundering of late. God prosper them!

Friday, Dec. Heard Mr. John Wesley from Eccles: II. 1. I liked him well; they kept a watchnight, and spent from eight till eleven in prayer and singing. It was much blessed to me. This night I supped at — who wants me to join a Church, that I may be sent out into the ministry. But God forbid that I should run before I am sent. Oh the weight, the insupportable weight of the ministry!"

About this time Robinson was urged by several friends to enter the ministry. But he resolved to wait patiently till he felt quite assured of the divine call. Meanwhile he went quietly down to Mildenhall, and became a farmer. But the simple folk with whom he mixed recognised his talents, and begged him to preach to them. This he did from the text "How should a man be just with God," Job ix, 2, and henceforth there was to be no turning back in his ministry. He no longer questioned his call to be a preacher of the gospel. In the following year he became pastor of a congre-

gation of Dissenters at Norwich, and from there he removed to Cambridge in 1761. Dr. Toulmin describes how at Norwich Robinson came to accept Baptist principles. "He was invited to the baptism of a child. The minister who was expected to perform the service keeping the company in long expectation of his appearance, someone suggested that supposing the child were not baptised at all he saw not how it would affect its happiness. . . . The hint struck Mr. Robinson's mind, and he immediately determined to read the New Testament with this particular view to examine what is said concerning the baptism of infants."

If a ministry in Cambridge had seemed attractive to the Norwich preacher, the difficulties on his arrival must have soon shown him that he had undertaken no easy task. The Church membership numbered only thirty-two, of whom nineteen resided outside the town. Their place of assembly had been "first a barn, afterwards a stable, then a meeting house; and notwithstanding its pews and galleries concealed its meanness within side a little, it was still a damp, dark, cold, ruinous, contemptible hovel." As regards his salary Robinson himself tells us "He had never enquired what the congregation would allow him, nor had anybody proposed anything: they had paid him for the first half-year £3 12s. 0d." A weak or cowardly man would have hesitated before taking up a ministry

under such conditions; but Robinson went boldly to work, nothing daunted, for, as he afterwards said, "he was a boy, and the love of his flock was a million to him." His courage was quickly rewarded. Soon the barn became too small to accommodate his hearers, and by the aid of some wealthy men who joined the Church at this period a suitable meeting-house was built in 1764, seating about 600 persons. In the following year it was found needful to appoint three or four "servants" with small stipends to act as stewards; "widow Clarke to sit in the ile on the preacher's left . . . for the credit of religion at Cambridge, where so many of the gown give such sad examples of rudeness." Two years later Robinson endeavoured to unite the now scattered body of Congregationalists with his own Church, seeing that Cambridge "was not large enough for the two to flourish." With rare unselfishness Robinson offered to resign in order to facilitate the union, but the Congregationalists declined to consider his overtures.

Robinson's labours were not confined to Cambridge. On one occasion he laid it down that "the seldomer a minister gads about, the better. He may improve his neighbour's field, but he must cultivate his own." Yet Robinson felt very rightly the claims of the neighbouring villages upon the town preacher, and in these villages some of his best work was done. Some

of his village sermons are still preserved, and bear witness to his practical commonsense. They were delivered in barns and private houses, sometimes at five o'clock in the morning, but an eager audience was never lacking. Those were days when knowledge was but slightly diffused among the rustics, and a sermon was a great event in the week. Robinson tells us of one illiterate old woman who was wont to rise an hour earlier in the morning to do extra spinning, and with the halfpenny thereby earned she paid a neighbour's boy to read to her daily a chapter of the Bible!

During the first years of his ministry Robinson resided, for economy's sake, at Hauxton. Here he began the literary work, which quickly made his name famous. In 1770 he translated Saurin's sermons, and in 1774 produced his first important work, *Arcana*, dealing with the principles of the petitioners to Parliament on the question of subscription. In the following year Robinson removed to Chesterton and turned his attention to farming, in order to add to his income. But he did not permit this to interfere with his literary and pastoral work. In 1776 he produced his best and greatest work, *A Plea for the Divinity of Jesus Christ.* Its value as a theological treatise was instantly recognised, and the author received the congratulations of many distinguished divines of the Anglican Church. Do the "Dissenters know

the worth of the man?" asked one of the professors, to which Robinson replied, "The man knows the worth of the Dissenters."

With all his passion for study and research Robinson had not always found it easy to procure the necessary books. About this time he had the good fortune to win the friendship of two excellent ladies at Trumpington, Ann and Susannah Calwell, who lived in a house belonging to Christopher Anstey. They procured for his use the library of Dr. Anstey, and probably rendered him pecuniary assistance in his literary pursuits. In 1777 he penned a somewhat satirical pamphlet on *The History and Mystery of Good Friday*, and in the next year published some *Lectures on Nonconformity* for the instruction of catechumens. He again utilised his thorough knowledge of French by translating some of Claude's works. These are still worth reading for the sake of the delightful notes which the translator has added.

In 1781 there came to Robinson a great honour. He was invited by his fellow Baptist ministers to undertake a history of the Baptist movement. In such a subject there was of course vast scope for original research, which inevitably led a man of Robinson's eager temperament into many bye-paths. With immense zeal he set to work, and learned even Spanish, Italian, and German, to aid him in his studies. He was determined, like all true

scholars, to go to the original documents, and form his own judgement of the facts. He resigned, as far as possible, his farming, and devoted all his spare time to the laborious work of reading old manuscripts. But the new studies were too much, even for a man of Robinson's physique. He gradually broke down in health, his preaching became less powerful, and from time to time he made unguarded statements which in earlier and more vigorous days he would never have uttered. This fatal pressure of overwork must always be remembered when we examine the charges of unorthodoxy which were levelled against him in his later years. This is not the place to discuss the niceties of theological formulæ, and label Robinson's later views, even if the writer were competent to do so. No doubt he was unwise in some of his statements about the Incarnation, and suffered from the want of a sound theological training in his early years. But it is quite unfair to quote—as some writers have done—isolated sayings, to prove Robinson's theological position. The truth is, that he was too conservative to please the unorthodox, and too broad-minded to satisfy the orthodox; thus he failed to win the real confidence of either party. What we are most concerned to know to-day is, whether Robinson was true to himself to the last; and there is abundant evidence to show that he never

degraded the ministry by preaching what he did not honestly believe. "Mere mental errors," says Robinson, "if they be not entirely innocent in the account of the Supreme Governor of mankind, cannot be, however, objects of blame and punishment among men." These words were received with anger by his contemporaries, but we who know so well to-day the profound difficulties of theological science can sympathise with the writer. This Baptist minister was a thinking man, trying to think out things for himself, and to impress respect for other people's opinions upon his followers. It is sad to find that in his last years some of his most faithful friends grew cold towards the minister who had served them so well. In 1791, Robinson, while on a visit to his friend, Dr. Priestley, in Birmingham, died, as he had always prayed he might, "softly, suddenly, and alone."

Robinson did a great work in Cambridge. But his influence extended far beyond his own town and his own particular sect. He was the author of two hymns, "Come; Thou fount of every blessing," and "Mighty God! while Angels bless Thee," which are sung by members of many different Churches. He was interested in education, and proposed a scheme for a Dissenting college at Cambridge where the students "might enjoy the literary advantages of an English University without being subject to its theological shackles." His hand, it is said,

penned the earliest petition to Parliament against slavery. Robinson's really great and permanent work was his defence of religious liberty, and he was aptly described by Robert Hall in his epitaph as "the intrepid champion of liberty, civil and religious." He was a whole-hearted Nonconformist, refusing again and again the tempting preferments which were offered him if he would join the Anglican Church. His polemics struck a new note in the history of Nonconformity. "The English Nonconformists absolutely deny all human authority in matters of religion . . . . they deny it to all civil governments of every form, as they think Jesus Christ the sole Head of the Christian Church." "For their civil principles they are ready to die as Britons, for their religious ones as Christians." Such assertions do not strike us as strange to-day, but in the middle of the eighteenth century they foretold a new era in the history of Nonconformity. Robinson made Dissenters feel that they were not merely folk to be tolerated, but that they had rights and claims of their own. It is not surprising that the writings of such an "intrepid champion" should have been censured by Burke in Parliament. But the Cambridge Baptist minister coolly retorted, "What I have said is *mercy* to what I could have said"!

X.

ROBINSON AND THE UNDERGRADUATES.

"Many a one
Owes to his country his religion;
And in another, would as strongly grow,
Had but his nurse or mother taught him so."—
The Compleat Angler.

Robinson's preaching attracted many members of the University. A visitor in 1775 declared that nearly two hundred gownsmen were present at one of Robinson's lectures, and "behaved with uncommon seriousness." But in the early years of his ministry the undergraduates came to the meeting-house only with the object of "ragging," and there are many stories of how the Dissenting minister without in the least losing his temper gave them the helpful word. On one occasion a playful student laid a wager that he would stand on the pulpit steps with an ear trumpet till the conclusion of Robinson's sermon. The great preacher quite ignored the gentleman's presence till a propitious moment, when in the course of his sermon he touched on the subject of divine grace. "A grace," he added, quietly pointing to the student, "which may be even extended to this *silly boy*." The ear trumpet fell to the

ground, and the surprised undergraduate lost his wager.

On another occasion Robinson observed a little knot of men who had evidently come to interrupt and annoy him. He turned his discourse quite naturally to a subtle point in natural science, and fixing his eye on the intruders remarked gravely, "It has long been a disputed question among philosophers whether there is such a thing as a vacuum in Nature; but the difficulty has at last been solved; it having been ascertained that there is a vacuum in the head of every undergraduate who disturbs a worshipping assembly in a dissenting meeting-house." One Sunday morning a sleepy young man came in for his attentions. "It is a rule with me," said Robinson, "never to use an expression which the humblest of my hearers cannot understand. I have just made use of the term *ocular demonstration.* I will explain it to you. I look into the table pew and I *see* a young man in a blue coat and scarlet waistcoat *fast asleep.*" On pronouncing these last two words he raised his voice, and all eyes being attracted to the unfortunate sleeper, he added in a lower tone, "Of that I have *ocular demonstration,*" and then continued his discourse in his usual manner.

There were times, however, when the conduct of the undergraduates was beyond rebuke from the pulpit, and most disgraceful scenes were

enacted in the meeting-house. An American minister remarked: "I have preached in England, Scotland, Ireland, and various parts of America, to congregations of all denominations; to polite citizens, and to naked Indians; but never did I see such heathenish impiety during divine service as in the Cambridge undergraduates." It must not be supposed that the students were actuated by a special antagonism to Dissent. Often, no doubt, the disturbances were due to boyish spirits and a love of fun which a stranger could not properly appreciate. Nevertheless the students' conduct cannot be excused, and still less that of the University authorities who did little to check them. Robinson in a famous sermon describes what must have been in a measure his own experience. His descriptions were no doubt taken from life. "When a young gentleman came first to College, finding no amusement in books, manuscripts, experiments, or any of the riches of literature, he must be amused with the oddities of Cambridge, among which old Hussey, the Presbyterian parson (as the cant of that day was) always numbered. Away a posse went to meeting, and in defiance of statutes and proctors, would publish all along the streets that they were going to have a little fun with the preacher. Arrived at the house they would bang the doors, stalk up the aisle, fling themselves on the sides of the pews. Just come from the country schools, many of them

from charity schools, they thought to give themselves airs were the marks of good breeding. One with a *lack lustre eye*, with a vacant countenance and a harmless heart, would toss and twirl and play with his cap: and when tired with that amusement would walk off. A second with *a brazen brow and an iron sinew*, if the minister ventured a word which was not in his school dictionary, would swear he never had heard such a word in his life. A third, who thought he must act some part, would laugh, and for want of discernment to know when, would often laugh when he ought to have blushed. A fourth, with *eyes full of adultery* (I use St. Peter's language) would stand on tiptoe, stare at all the ladies in the meeting, and sometimes, O lost to all decency! would peep under the women's hats. Do you wonder, my brethren, that there have been instances of the good women's losing all christian patience and, before the whole assembly, slapping their faces? Ought that young gentleman to complain, who, one day mistaking an old, for a young woman, was knocked down by the old lady for his impertinence?"

Robinson made several appeals to the University authorities with regard to the behaviour of the undergraduates, but without much effect. The chief offenders were two members of Emmanuel College, and when, on one occasion, the meeting was actually broken

up and the congregation forced to disperse, Robinson determined to write direct to Dr. Farmer, tutor, and afterwards master of Emmanuel. Here is part of a letter which the trustees of the St. Andrew's meeting-house despatched to the College:—

Dec. '69.

"REVEREND SIR,

. . . . A gentleman of Mr. Farmer's delicacy and piety will find it difficult to believe half we could tell him on this head. Would you imagine, sir, that we scarcely ever meet without interruptions from the undergraduates; that every agreeable female in the society is exposed to the same insults as in a bawdy house; no pew privileged from a bold intrusion; no family, however considerable in fortune or credit, free from insolent affronts? . . . . Let a veil for ever cover these enormities. Nothing induces us to mention them now but the desire of convincing Dr. Farmer that our lenity has been infamously abused, and consequently that it is a duty we owe to the society under our management to support prosecution."

This Dr. Farmer was quite a Cambridge celebrity in the eighteenth century, and as Master, made a genial host in the Emmanuel Parlour on Sunday evenings. Gunning, in his *Reminiscences*, gives an account of one of Dr. Farmer's Sundays, which, as it represents another side of Cambridge religious

life, is worth quoting. "For many years before he was elected to the Mastership he had the curacy of Swavesey (about nine miles distant), where he made a point of attending in all weathers. He began the service punctually at the appointed time, and gave a plain practical sermon, strongly enforcing some moral duty. After service he chatted most affably with his congregation, and never failed to send some small present to such of his poor parishioners as had been kept from church through illness. After morning service he repaired to the public-house, where a mutton chop and potatoes were soon set before him; these were quickly dispatched, and immediately after the removal of the cloth Mr. Dobson (his Churchwarden), and one or two farmers, made their appearance; to whom he invariably said 'I am going to read prayers, but shall be back by the time you have made the punch.' Occasionally another farmer accompanied him from church, when pipes and tobacco were in requisition up to six o'clock. Taffy was then led to the door, and he conveyed his master to his rooms by 7.30: there he found his slippers and nightcap, and taking possession of his elbow chair, he slept till his bedmaker aroused him at 9 o'clock, when, resuming his wig, he started for the *Parlour* where the Fellows were in the habit of assembling on a Sunday evening."

Like many an honest man of the eighteenth

century, Dr. Farmer had an inveterate dislike of Dissenters—in fact, he could not understand them. No doubt he was greatly perplexed by the letters of Robinson and his friends, claiming that the two culprits should pay a handsome fine, or make a public apology in the newspaper. Eventually an apology was inserted in the *Cambridge Chronicle*, 23 Dec., 1769; "Whereas we the under-mentioned in open violation of the laws of this kingdom, and particularly of the Act of Toleration, did on Thursday evening last during the time of divine service disturb the congregation of Protestant Dissenters assembled at the new meeting house in St. Andrew's St.; and whereas by the Act above mentioned, the said offences exposes us to a forfeiture of £40 and other penalties, and whereas the trustees of that meeting generously agree not to inflict the rigour of the Act on condition of our asking public pardon, we thankfully acknowledging their lenity, do ask pardon of the whole congregation, and promise to offend no more in like manner." The names follow and a note. "In consideration of the general good character given by the tutor to one of the young gentlemen, the trustees omit the publication of his name."

It is pleasant to turn from this painful episode to the question of the abolition of subscription, which was beginning to be discussed in Cambridge. In 1771 Tyrwhitt, of Jesus, a

friend of Robinson's, introduced a grace to the Senate for the purpose of exempting B.A.'s from subscription. But it was inevitably rejected. In the same year a number of undergraduates, led by a certain Crawford, a fellow commoner of Queens', presented a "Humble Petition" to the Vice-Chancellor against the injustice of subscription. "That in consequence of the multiplicity of academic engagements they have neither the leisure, nor the opportunity of enquiry into the abstruser points of theology: that they nevertheless found themselves under a necessity of declaring their unfeigned assent to a set of theological propositions, apparently of high argument and of great importance." They earnestly begged to be excused from subscription, or "that such timely assistance may be afforded in the respective colleges as will enable your petitioners to satisfy their consciences." The Vice-Chancellor replied that he had no power to grant the petition.

No doubt some of the Dissenters of this time sacrificed their principles for the sake of obtaining degrees. Robinson, in a letter dated "Trumpington, Feb. 6th, 1777," gives us a picture of the temptations to which a Dissenter at Cambridge was exposed.

"For my part I see so much here of the hierarchical constitution itself to destroy every generous and noble sentiment of the mind that I cannot help weeping often at the scene.

To-day an undergraduate visits me, protests he does not believe the Articles, has not read the Homilies, dislikes the Canons, and believes the very Prayer-book wants mending; to-morrow he goes into the Senate House, takes the Oath of Supremacy, comes out graduated, gets ordained and commences an able minister of the New Testament! I have seen so many instances of prevarication on one side and dominion on the other that sometimes my whole soul is covered with gloom on account of it. I avoid the company of the gown. I converse with the dead, whose works remain. I retire into solitary groves, pour out my heart in grief, and appealing to heaven, cry 'Lord! how long?' . . . The sight of this spiritual despotism is a tax laid on Dissenting ministers at Cambridge, and we pay it by abundant distress."

XI.

ROBINSON THE MAN.

"I ask no pardon for expressing my abhorrence of intolerance. Always when I met it in a course of reading I thought I met the great devil, and my resentment was never abated by his appearing in the habit of a holy man of God."—*Robinson.*

In Charles Lamb's Essays there are allusions to a certain G. D., whose absentmindedness he delights to illustrate. "Amicus Redivivus" is an account of how this mysterious G. D. was one fine day so wrapt in thought that he walked straight into the river near Lamb's house at Islington. G. D., we gather from Lamb, was a quiet, unobtrusive student, fond of libraries and old books; a man of inborn integrity and kindliness. "For with G. D. to be absent from the body is sometimes (not to speak profanely) to be present with the Lord. At the very time when personally encountering thee he passes on with no recognition—on being stopped starts like a thing surprised—at that moment, Reader, he is on Mount Tabor or co-sphered with Plato . . . . peradventure meditating some individual kindness or courtesy to be done to *thee thyself*, the returning consciousness of which made him to start so guiltily at thy obtruded personal presence." This G. D. is George Dyer, a member of Emmanuel College, and a friend of Robert

Robinson. He wrote a Memoir of Robinson which is said to have won the admiration of Wordsworth, and had the distinction of being translated into German under the title "The Model Preacher." The title is an ambitious one, and whatever the merits of Robinson in the pulpit, Dyer would have been the first to declare that he was drawn to him more as a man than as a preacher.

The trait in Robinson's character which most impressed Dyer and other writers was his intense hatred of cant and hypocrisy in all their varied forms. With unerring instinct Robinson noted the little weaknesses of humanity, and sometimes deemed it necessary to expose them. When he did this to an empty preacher who loved to hear his own voice, he was wont to call it "pricking the bladder." "Preachers," he declared, "are too full of wind, and it is mercy to let it out." "Dear souls—precious souls—dearly beloved—and a hundred more such phrases, have been hackneyed out of their senses in the Christian pulpit." He had no patience with brethren who spent their time in gossiping, and spoke with grave faces of "the laborious work of the ministry." He had no sympathy whatever with men who were "ready to burst with orthodoxy," and "so stuffed with faith that they had no room for virtue." People who were only brisk talkers in matters of religion he sometimes grossly offended by an outward carelessness of

manner. "Well, brother," he would say at the conclusion of a theological discussion, "I must now begin to consider the price of wheat, and leave those who have leisure to fathom profound problems. . . . . Brethren, I have delivered my present sentiments, but I am going to feed the swans at the end of my garden: on my return I may think differently." For the regular heresy-hunter Robinson had no mercy. The preacher's orthodoxy on the subject of a personal devil was questioned, and one suspicious brother inquired, "Don't you believe in a devil?" "Oh dear no, I believe in God, don't you?" was the quick reply. When a sermon taster asked solemnly, "Friend, I never heard you preach on the Trinity!" Robinson retorted, "Oh I intend to do so as soon as ever I understand it." But though Robinson could shock the mere talker he would never needlessly offend simple folk of genuine piety. He distinguished carefully between "illiterate" and "ignorant" preachers. He was too shrewd a man not to understand that there are diversities of methods as well as diversities of gifts. He learned this lesson from his own farmyard at Chesterton. "I have in my pig sty ten white pigs and one black one. The other morning as I passed by I heard the black pig squeaking away lustily, and I thought to myself, 'That's pig language; I don't understand it, but perhaps it pleases the white ones; they are quiet enough.'"

It was inevitable that Robinson's controversial writings should arouse a storm of criticism. Able arguments on the other side he always appreciated, but nothing disgusted him more than the utter lack of sympathy of theological opponents. "The temper of the Plea," he wrote of his book on Christ's Divinity, "has procured me a deal of blame from good folks who inhabit the torrid zone. I wish people would renounce the disposition to damn mankind." He was justly irritated by the superficiality of some of his critics. "I do not want authorities of great names," he exclaimed, "I want reason to convince my understanding. I do not want a quoter of texts, but a good sound logician, ... a cool, deliberate, honest disciple of Jesus, who pauses, and weighs, and admits the refining fire of inquiry to burn freely. . . . As for mere squirrels that jump and frisk and crack nuts, they divert me; for in my eye their idiotism is the seal of their salvation. But I hate your Cat o' mountains that hiss and scratch out harmless people's eyes. Brother, let us not be mischievous by our tempers; let us not be Jack no-bodies by our idleness and inactivity. Let us begin to study at the feet of the quiet and mild Master, and in patience, as He hath taught us, possess our souls."

Robinson numbered among his friends men of all ranks and classes. His correspondents included some interesting personalities of the

eighteenth century. His fame spread abroad, and he was visited by several distinguished men. With his passionate devotion to liberty, Robinson naturally found much to admire in the American people, and he was highly gratified by the honour of receiving some American guests in his home at Chesterton.

"There sat I in my own hall in more than Indian rapture—over against me my wife making tea—on my right hand the honourable speaker of the American house of Congress—on my left, the great General Read, second to Washington in the American army—next to him an envoy from the States—and along with us a circle of friends listening to the honied accents of their tongues, distilling with all the richest and most fragrant sounds of liberty .... when in came a well-known grave and lowly figure, and addressed me with 'My dear naughty boy!' Full of ideas of dignity, I said with Mungo in the Paddock, 'Naughty boy! naughty yourself! old massa little tink how great I be!' .... Seriously my American guests came on Saturday evening—spent the Lord's day with us—departed on Monday afternoon, and left me the choice of the cabin of the Washington, and as much land in the States as I would wish to accept. Happiest of countries! Peace and prosperity attend you! I shall never see you; but if I forget the ability and virtue that struggled to obtain, and actually did obtain, all that man-

kind hold dear, let my right hand forget her cunning."

The most interesting visitor whom Robinson received was the renowned German theologian, Heinrïch Paulus. The preacher alludes to this in a letter. "Oct. 8, 1788. . . . Lord's day. After service, Frend, Barham, Paulus, Dyer, another and myself drank tea with the venerable Mr. Tyrwhitt. He is the grandson of Gibson, Bishop of London, and stood full in the path of preferment, but conscience forbad. . . . Monday. With the utmost regret parted with Barham to Oxford, and Paulus to Germany .... Spent the day in examining an ancient MS. of the New Testament of Wickliffe, lent me that morning by Mr. Frend, fellow of Jesus, out of the cabinet of Jesus library."

The Baptist minister made a most favourable impression upon the great theologian. "Your English theologians did not much please me. I found but one man who really interested me, and him I consider one of the most excellent men I ever saw. This was R. Robinson of Cambridge; with me he is the beau-ideal of the Christian minister. I loved him even for his weaknesses. With all his peculiarities he was thoroughly liberal. In his attachment to the Baptists there was a union of childlike simplicity and kindheartedness that was quite charming."

Paulus thus describes the first encounter. "This evening at 7.30 we went to a meeting

house where Mr. Robinson, one of the most learned and highly esteemed Nonconformists in England, was holding a devotional service. The simple clearness and straightforward practicality, united with winning heartiness, of the entirely extemporaneous utterances which flowed from this man's lips quite won me to him during the first half-hour. His face expresses power of investigation, firmness, unalloyed modesty, and a great fund of generosity and benevolence. After the meeting I went into the vestry where Mr. Barham introduced me to Mr. Robinson. The man was standing there like a fatherly friend amongst some of his congregation, who took this opportunity to ply him with one question after another. He had nothing of that pretentious air which many clergymen assume, especially when they are talking to members of their own congregation." The theologian was interested in Robinson's basis of Church-membership. Baptism, Paulus found, depended on the opinions of the intending member, and was not compulsory. "Whoever wishes to join is presented to the meeting by the minister, and then is asked to state in language of his own if he be a Christian. He is quite free to make this statement in whatever expression he likes; to say that he is a disciple of Christ's, or that he accepts Jesus as the Messiah, or as the Son of God, or as God, would be quite sufficient." Paulus'

impressions of Oxford and Cambridge in 1788 are of general interest. "Oxford in theology stands as massively steadfast as her own Gothic piles. But in Cambridge one meets with here and there, at any rate, liberal ideas which in Oxford would not be thought of, even in a dream. But even at Cambridge they do not prevail generally . . . . The establishment of the English High Church produces everywhere, even in free Cambridge, traces of hypocrisy. If one does not believe, one must at least externally profess to believe . . . . At the end of each term the Vice-Chancellor absolves, after a Latin formula prescribed in the Statutes, all members of the University for all their breaches of the Statutes. 'I restore you to God and the Church,' says the end of the formula. The Statutes are added to nearly every year by members of the University, so they now form so large a volume as to make this absolution quite necessary"!

Robinson seems to have been very happy in his home life. He had a numerous family—in all twelve children—and in his home lived his aged mother, who survived him. He himself was very fond of children, and soon made friends with those of the members of his congregation. One of his favourites was a certain little Ebenezer Foster, and at Hauxton there still exists the epitaph which Robinson wrote on the death in infancy of four children

of Mr. Richard Foster. It is not commonly known that Robinson's famous hymn, "Mighty God, while angels bless Thee," had originally for its second line "May an infant lisp Thy praise," and was written by the author with a child on his knee. To his own daughters Robinson was devoted. Here is part of a letter to one of the youngest written during a visit to Scotland.

"Now, my Kit, it is your turn to have a letter, and as I cannot reach you to kiss you, as I used to do all your sisters when they were little, I must e'en write to you, for I cannot make you hear me if I speak. What a charming art is that of *writing*; pray learn to write as soon as you can. Somebody had written upon the window of my room at Newcastle, 'Miss Kitty is charming and pretty.' What do you think made this Northumberland Kitty charming? Why her charming *behaviour*, to be sure. Pray do you practice good manners? But beside learning to write and behave pretty, learn also to *spell* and to write *good sense*. Somebody had written under the above line 'Miss Peggee Cradock is *ditto*.' . . . . The writer, you see, could not spell Peggy, and had he been a gentleman he would not have written '*ditto*.' . . . . Tell your grandmother as I was coming out of the inn at Durham an old beggar intreated me to relieve her because she was an old woman. . . . Assure your grandmother that you will behave well to all old women, particularly to *Ousden*

and *Crab*, because you will be an old woman yourself by and by. . . . Tell Patty that a little dog in a wheel like your singing cage roasted my dinner yesterday at Morpeth. That little dog deserved the bones. Tell Het that the Derbyshire folks say 'ye toir and fateeg ye' instead of 'you tire and fatigue yourself.' The Yorkshire folk say 'chirch yaard is note but mook' for 'the Churchyard is nothing but muck.' Tell her the Northumbrians say 'hoot of thee' for 'root of tree,' for they cannot pronounce the *r*. Tell Pol that little fat boys and girls divert themselves by climbing up steep hills and cliffs, and rolling and sliding down lump, lump, from cliff to cliff. . . . Good-bye, Miss Kit, good-bye."

The death of his daughter Julia was a great sorrow to Robinson. Her grave can still be seen in the Chesterton Churchyard. "Julia was the beauty and pride of my family. She was straight as an arrow, five feet ten inches high. A dark eye like fire, and an oval visage full of sensibility and sweetness. A complexion like the lily tinged with the blush of the rose. She had a fund of sterling wit, and a wise grave reason that directed the use of it . . . . She knitted me purses of various hues, and pencilled landscapes and coloured flowers which I have neither the prudence to avoid, nor the courage to survey. . . . . She had felicity enough to enjoy and communicate, and her sisters, who

always waited on her, said: 'Father, Jule is an angel!' My heart, my aching heart. She *was* an angel . . . . How wonderful are God's ways! My mother at ninety, with a complexion and a vivacity proper to seventeen, goes into mourning for seventeen, decrepid, departed, decayed!"

In 1780, Robinson made, with his Trumpington friends and his son Robert, a long tour which was the occasion of several interesting letters. He journeyed first to Oxford "to see what was curious in the University," and address "a little society of Dissenters then forming themselves into what is called church order." Thence he proceeded by gradual stages to Scotland. It was an immense relief to the preacher, who hated conventionality, to throw aside his clerical attire, and, with "a light blue coat and brown thread stockings," to pass as an ordinary tourist. Edinburgh did not much please Robinson. "We stayed at Edinburgh from Monday till Thursday, and should have stayed longer could we have reconciled ourselves to nastiness." Professor Robertson showed the visitor everything worth seeing, and the University apparently offered him the diploma of doctor in divinity. But the preacher declined the honour, saying afterwards, "so many egregious dunces had been made D.D.'s both at English as well as Scotch and American Universities!" From Edinburgh

the travellers went to Midcalder, where the ancient inn-keeper amused Robinson. "He lamented that he had *na cheeld*, and made me kiss the son of one of his postillions, of whom he was very fond. '*Gee um*,' said he, '*twaw baubee to be um a buskit*'; that is, 'give him a penny to buy him a biscuit.' The old man's head had been terribly hacked in fighting for Charley against King George. He deserved it, for he killed in one day twelve of the king's men. Yet this old rebel, who owed his life entirely to the king's mercy, execrates the Americans for rising up against their sovereign lord the king! . . . . In the evening, we arrived at Glasgow, and are lodged in a private house. We have a whole *land*, that is, up three pair of stairs, a dining-room, three bedrooms, and a kitchen, with Nelly Drummond, a bare-footed Highland lass, to wait on us." Robinson regarded Glasgow as the first city in Scotland. "The college or university consists of several courts not unlike our Pembroke College . . . . the Scotch have far more of the face of religion than the English, and their Kirks are full on the Lord's Day." He was much pleased with a sermon from a young minister, Mr. Finlay, at the college kirk. "Methought there was a singular sweetness in one word uttered by the minister. 'We preach to you,' said he, '*God in Christ.*' O, thought I, I have been seeing for some weeks past God in the rocks

and the roaring ocean, God in the rivers and groves and delightful valleys, God in the deep mines and caverns of the earth, God in the arts and sciences of men—but in none of these could I see a God pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin. But here in the Church, in the Bible —here is *God in Christ*, my Rock and my Redeemer!" Robinson greatly admired the Scotch scenery, and wrote home charming descriptions, but he was not altogether sorry when the time came to return to Cambridge. "I am so full of riding and staring that rest would be a kingdom to me. Bob does not want to come home, he says. He likes his life and enjoys himself wonderfully."

It must not be supposed that with all his varied interests Robinson neglected his pastoral duties. He was wont to visit the poorest in the villages, and share their black bread and tea, saying that "When a poor person shows anxiety to administer to your comfort, do not interrupt him." He would always help a needy brother. "I believe," wrote the Rev. Josiah Thompson, "if he had but a guinea in the world, if he saw a family in distress that he thought wanted it more than himself he would readily part with it to them, and trust Providence for a future supply." For some of the humbler members of his congregation he performed numberless errands of mercy on his periodical visits to London.

In his memoranda are notes like the following:—"Gown for poor M. M. R.'s son to be seen. H. wishes Mr. H. to be merciful. W. thinks his son's wages too small. Watts' hymns for T. H. Testament for G."

And these people we may be sure did not think less of Robinson because he could, when limited circumstances demanded, turn farmer at Chesterton, and even work a grind on the river. Some divines, it is true, looked on askance. "Godly boobies," Robinson would say, "spending all their time in tattling and mischief; are these the men to censure my industry?" As for those who spent all their time in "fine criticism and strokes of oratory." "I feel three pounds gained honestly by the sale of a fat bullock produce more fire in my spirit than all those pretty, but poor tassels and spangles can give me. With three pounds I can set fire to ten cold hearts, frozen with infirmity, widowhood, poverty, and fear."

A few members of the Cambridge Church also thought Robinson's manual labours beneath his dignity as a minister. One day a worthy sister came to speak to him in the vestry, while he was discoursing with some undergraduates. "How do you do, Sarah? I am glad to see you returned safe from visiting your family at Soham." "Bless the Lord, Sir, I am. We heard Mr. Watts on the Lord's Day, and were much edified indeed, but the day after we were coming

out of town my husband saw him—and, poor creature, he was so shocked. O, sir! there was the poor man on the top of a ladder a thatching a rick!" When Robinson laughed and tried to defend his brother minister, the good woman pointed out that he had worked five days, and therefore only Saturday remained for study.

"Well, Sarah, I shall try to convince him that he ought to work five days; for one day will never make him a scholar, and his people are only a set of turf-diggers: and fourteen pence more in his pocket every Lord's Day will make him preach with more vigour and rattle the gospel with more power into the turf-men's souls. I appeal to these learned gentlemen," turning to the students.

In one of his letters (Chesterton, May 26, 1784) Robinson gives an account of one day's work on his farm, which, nearly a century later, found its way into a story of Mrs. Gaskell's. It is too long to quote in full, but we may give some portions.

"Rose at three o'clock—crawled into the library —and met One who said 'Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light —the night cometh when no man can work.' Rang the great bell and roused the girls to milking—went up to the farm, roused the horse-keeper—fed the horses while he was getting up—called the boy to suckle the calves, and clean out the cow-house—lighted the pipe and went round

the gardens to see what was wanting there—went down to the ferry to see whether the boy had scooped and cleaned the boats—returned to farm, examined the corn of eight horses going to plough—pumped the troughs full—saw the hogs fed—ordered a quartern of malt, for the hogs want grains and the men want beer —filled the pipe again—called the men to breakfast and cut the boys' bread and cheese—sold the butcher a fat calf—the clock strikes nine—walked into the barley field, barleys fine—the peas fine, but foul; the charlock must be topped —the tares doubtful—prayed for rain but could not see a cloud . . . . went to see which lands wanted ploughing first—sat down under a bush —wondered how any man could be so silly as to call me *reverend*—read two verses and thought of His loving kindness in the midst of His temple—gave out 'Come all harmonious tongues' and set Mount Ephraim tune—rose up, whistled —the dogs wagged their tails and on we went—got home—dinner ready—filled the pipe—drank some milk—and fell asleep—the Reverend Messrs. A. in a coat, B. in a gown of black, and C. in one of purple came to drink tea and to settle whether Gomer was father of the Celts and Gauls and Britons or only the Uncle—proof sheet from Mr. Archdeacon—corrected it—washed—dressed—went to meeting and preached from 'the end of all things is at hand. Be sober and watch unto prayer'—found a dear brother

reverence there who went home with me, and edified us all out of Solomon's Song, with a dish of tripe out of Leviticus and a golden candlestick out of Exodus."

No doubt Robinson was happy at Chesterton. He writes later. "Here I weed my garden, plough the silver stream with my two-oar boat, read, scribble, contemplate, and fill my soul with ideas of the Great Supreme, and with the joyful prospect of a blessed immortality. Here the blossoms of my flowers and fruits regale my scent; the lark compliments me when I rise; the cuckoo attunes the morning breeze; the owl sings me to sleep; and if I awake in the night, the nightingale beneath my window lulls me to rest again." In 1789 he can still look forward to the harvest with exultation. "Plum puddings and rustic songs, roast beef, old beer, and old Robin Gray, will be our fare, highly finished off before break of day with a deep-toned 'largess! my liege!' . . . . Harvest comes but once a year!" But though Robinson could write buoyant letters, there is some evidence that he was suffering severely during his last years from the pressure of his studies. The *History of Baptism*, and the *Ecclesiastical Researches*, published after his death, though they show the most remarkable erudition and the widest reading, were not worth the sacrifice of a life so valuable as Robinson's. The last picture we have of him is rather pathetic. Some of his

friends have accused him of being unorthodox; a few have denied him their friendship altogether. He is worn out at fifty-four by a too energetic life. His farm work has been given up, and the stock sold, with the exception of two cats, which take a daily walk with him down his garden to the willow which hangs over the Cam, to remind him, he declares, that he has not lost all esteem!

XII.

THE EARLY CAMBRIDGESHIRE CHURCHES.

"The Baptists are perhaps the only Christian sect in which a Christian of the year 100 would not find himself out of place."—*Reinach*, 1909.

"In the acquisition of a new habit, or the leaving off of an old one, we must take care to launch ourselves with as strong and decided an initiative as possible."—*W. James.*

The Baptists lay great stress on the importance of conversion. Their ministry is essentially a converting ministry: their prime interest as a denomination is the conversion of the heathen. In this they could claim, if it were desirable, to be thoroughly in touch with the times. Conversion has long been recognised by students of psychology and comparative religions as a widespread scientific fact. The idea of the New Birth, on the other hand, is thoroughly in line with the teaching of a fashionable philosopher like Rudolf Eucken, of Jena. For emphasizing the need of conversion, believer's baptism is, and was, in the earliest times, of immense value. Pamphleteers of the seventeenth century ridiculed the rite in every conceivable way. But the Baptists could afford to be laughed at, for they were asserting a certain definiteness in religious

life which the seventeenth, as well as later centuries, needed. The open witness of baptism has always been of the greatest use, both in strengthening the converts themselves, and in impressing outsiders. It has tended to guard the evangelical position, and to preserve the Baptists from some extravagances of theological speculation. It helps to check the common superstition—against which Mr. Chesterton warred only last autumn in Cambridge—that England is necessarily a Christian country.

Wise Richard Baxter charges the early Baptists with indecency in carrying out their rite, and complains that baptism in the rivers may be highly detrimental to health. Baxter was, no doubt, largely influenced in his charges by popular prejudices, but there is certainly something to be said for his objections on the grounds of health. And yet in these days of effeminacy, we cannot help admiring the old Baptist heroes who almost gloried in the hardships which the observance of their rite involved. Here is a record of a young man's baptism in the seventeenth century:

"John Cropper was baptised . . . . in the 22nd year of his age, Jan. 19th. Observe, it was at that time a hard frost and deep snow, and yet no hurt ensued. God will be honoured in His own ways, and protect His servants in the obeying of His commands. Let none be afraid to venture into the water when the season is

cold, lest they be laid in their graves before the weather is warm."

To refined and cultured people to-day immersion may not appear to be a very attractive rite. Perhaps this is not altogether a disadvantage. But it ought to be more generally known that the earliest English Baptists practised affusion. Still immersion preserves, in a very significant manner, St. Paul's profound spiritual idea of being buried with Christ in baptism, and rising to walk in newness of life. And none who have been present at baptismal services will say that they lack reverence and simple devotion. In olden times it must have been a fine discipline for some plough boy who had been touched by the word of the "messenger" to be baptised in the village stream, or for some country lass who had been impressed by the message of the gospel to go down to the river and acknowledge her faith before the assembled villagers. There are, indeed, many places along the Cam and Ouse full of the most sacred memories, where humble men and women dedicated their lives to the service of their Lord Jesus Christ.

As the Baptists grew in numbers and influence, baptisms in the river declined in popularity. Baptisteries were built in, or beside, the chapels. St. Andrew's Meeting-house, Cambridge, at first possessed a baptistery in the adjoining garden, and Robert Robinson had a

private baptistery at Chesterton, where he baptised six of his children. But baptisms in the river continued, and during the eighteenth century Fulbourne and Whittlesford were often visited by Cambridge Baptists for the purpose of holding baptismal services. Here is an account of a baptism at Whittlesford in 1767, where Ebenezer Hollick, a well-known Baptist, was lord of the manor.

"At ten o'clock of a very fine morning in May, about fifteen hundred people of different ranks assembled together, and Dr. Andrew Gifford preached from a movable pulpit. About half-an-hour after, the administrator, in a long black gown of fine baize, without a hat, with a small New Testament in his hand, came down to the river, accompanied by several Baptist ministers and deacons, and the persons to be baptised. The men came first, two and two, without hats, and dressed as usual, except that instead of coats each had on a long white baize gown, tied round the waist with a sash. Such as had no hair wore white cotton or linen caps.

The women followed the men, two and two, all dressed neat, clean, and plain, and their gowns white linen or dimity. Each had a long, light silk cloak hanging loosely over her shoulders, a broad ribband tied over her gown beneath her breast, and a hat on her head. They all ranged themselves round the administrator at the water side. A great multitude of

spectators stood on the banks of the river on both sides; some climbed and sat on the trees, many sat on horseback and in carriages, and all behaved with a decent seriousness which did honour to the good sense and the good manners of the assembly, as well as to the free constitution of this country."

The administrator read a hymn and expounded. "And then taking one of the men by the hand, he led him into the water, saying as he went, 'See here is water: what doth hinder! If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest be baptised.' . . . . Then he deliberately said, 'I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' and while he uttered these words, standing wide, he gently leaned him backward, and dipped him once. As soon as he had raised him, a person in a boat, fastened there for the purpose, took hold of the man's hand, wiped his face with a napkin, and led him a few steps to another attendant, who then gave him his arm, walked with him to the house, and assisted him to dress."

To describe with any precision in a popular narrative the government of the early Cambridgeshire Churches would be impossible. It varied according to time and place. The officers in the seventeenth century would generally consist of a "pastor" or "teacher," together with "elders" and "deacons." They were chosen

by a free election, and afterwards ordained by the laying on of hands. This custom was generally prevalent in the earliest Churches, though some disputed its lawfulness. At Wisbech, for example, John Denne, as its advocate, was "opposed by our brother Taylor, who laboured mightily to overthrow it." The pastor, ideally, was supposed to remain in his first charge, and was obliged to obtain the permission of his own Church before removing to another. When Hussey left Cambridge without the permission of his people he was actually "admonished," and, it is said, prohibited from again entering the pulpit of the "Great Meeting." In addition to the permanent pastors, we read of "messengers," or travelling evangelists, who were usually the most competent elders, sent forth to preach in the neighbouring villages. While absent, their families were supported by members of the congregation. The "elders" must be carefully distinguished from the "deacons." The functions of the former were spiritual, the latter were only concerned with the secular affairs of the Church. But the work of the "deacons" was not unimportant, for great care was taken to help the poorer members in their need. When J. Wilson, of Eversden, had his barns burned (1655), a letter was sent by his congregation to the neighbouring villages to beg for assistance. The Church-books of the eighteenth century contain many

accounts of collections for various charities, *e.g.* "1729. A Brief of Isleham Meeting for a great loss by fire at Copenhagen in Denmark, the sum of seven shillings and one penny." "1710. Enciemia Oxon one shilling." "1717. Collected for reformed church in great poland and polish prusha, one shilling."

A prominent duty of the "elders" was the admonition of those unruly members who absented themselves from the meetings. It was the custom for two elders to go together and solemnly wait upon such persons. Some of the causes of absence given are intensely human. When Widow Binns, of Over, was asked why she no longer came to the Dissenters' meeting, but attended the Church of England, she replied "Mr. Pope was a great friend of hers, and she did it to please him." Sister Smith, of Holywell, when admonished for absence, answered, "Now I have taken with a private walking wherein I have found comfort." To which Brother Maile replies "For your private walking you have no warrant in scripture, which saith 'Those that feared the Lord spoke often one to another'" Mal. iii, 16. But sometimes the offences were of a more serious nature, and met with the punishment of excommunication. The Church-books are full of cases of excommunication, which throw a flood of light on social life in our villages during the eighteenth century. We must not criticise

these early Churches if they exercised the right of excommunication with some frequency, for they were contending for their very existence. It was essential that the members should maintain in the sight of their neighbours a very high standard of morality, and it was always possible for the expelled member to be joyfully restored after a season of repentance. Perhaps we may learn lessons from a time when Church-membership meant so much, and was valued so highly. Human nature was much the same in the eighteenth as in the twentieth century, and even to join the Church and make a public declaration of faith was not always easy. "Prue Corby (daughter of Samuel Corby), who had attempted *three or four times* before to speak of the dealings of God with her soul, and was disabled from going through the narrative thereof, now spake thereof boldly and graciously in the ears of the Church."

A fairly frequent reason for being "cut off" or "cast out" was marriage with an unbeliever outside the Church. In 1655, in Cambridge, a meeting of the elders of several congregations was held to discuss the whole question. And it was finally agreed "that it is not lawful for any member of the congregation to marry with any without the congregation: Likewise it was resolved, that all persons offending in this case shall be sharply reproved according to the rule of the scriptures against sinners: and if they

refuse to hear they shall be excommunicated." This custom was strictly enforced for a century or more.

Here are some quotations on the subject from a village record of 1696. "That if a Brother has in mind to Joyn himself to a woman, he ought not to take his own judgement if she has grace, but ought to acquaint the Church, and desire *their* Judgement."

"We judge it the Children's duty before Cov'nant, to ask the Advice of the parents in the matter."

"But if the parties cannot take their Affections off one another, though the parents be unwilling, we judge they may go on in *the thing*."

"If a brother and sister have promised marriage to each other, the parents of each other that go about to make them break the promise, do sin, and *ought to be punished*."

In 1725 we find a serious-minded deacon, perhaps with many home cares, writing thus in a Wisbech Church-book:

"July 29, George Slacksby was withdrawn for marrying a wife out of communion, having done so once before, and having had sufficient warning from time to time, which is of very ill consequence in grieving the Church, in setting an evil example to the brethren to despise their sisters, *and in wrong to our sisters that are disposed for marriage*."

Here is a letter written by Hussey to a girl

whose sole offence, apparently, was marriage outside the Church:

"SUSAN ORLEBAR,—For I will salute your person by your old name. You having committed heinous offences and sins against the Lord Christ, and us of this Congregational Church of saints (!) and in open slander against the gospel before the world, declared your sin as Sodom and hid it not, we have voted to meet the 2nd Thursday of January, 1700, in order to humble ourselves before the Lord, and by giving you up in the name of the Lord Christ to Satan, cut you off by the terrible sentence from any relation to the Church; that you may find it utter destruction to the flesh, and that your spirit, if you belong to Christ, may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus—. These are therefore to give you notice, inasmuch as the Church is bound by the indispensable laws of Christ's Government to proceed in the sharpest way against you for your manifold scandals. We shall, if the Lord will, effect it the Day and Month written.—Given at our Church Meeting, Thursday, Nov. 7th, 1700."

In an old manuscript describing Dissenters in London in the seventeenth century, it is interesting to find the opinion of a man of the world concerning the strictness of the Dissenters. "There, Pastors have an absolute dominion; for a maid or a widow cannot make honest provision for the flesh in the Honorable way of matrimony

without their consent. Once upon a time, not long ago, a Marchant who had lived many years beyond the sea, and returning rich to his own country, spyed an independent virgin, beautiful, and rich, and was immediately wounded to the heart. He humbly implores the help of the maid, who told him she could not marry without the consent of her spiritual guides. Love directs the languishing lover to him; who questions with him what Church he was of. He told him of the Church of England. Why then, quoth he, you must get a Church of England mistress. But if you will become a member of my Congregation, make confession of your faith openly, and enter into our spiritual Church covenant, I will then undertake to melt down your fair enemye to a compliance with your desires. Oh powerful and mighty Love! The love-sick man accepts the conditions, studies a confession of faith, reads it openly to the People, is admitted a member. By this means 'tis not to be imagined how many persons of estates are brought to join with them. But they are careful that they admit few or no poor ones to come in among them: for they worship the Golden Fleece and their ministers are very rich"!

The early Cambridgeshire records show that if the Dissenters had some quaint notions, they were at least thoroughly in earnest about their religion. Again and again in the Church-books there are notices of days set apart for prayer and

fasting, *e.g.* Guyhern, 1693, "Days to be set apart for prophesy, and to pray the Master of the harvest to thrust forth labourers." Nor was religion neglected in the home, as the following quotations testify: "Duty of heads of family to pray publicly with his family on the Lord's Day morning, and not to *lye in bed* till it can't be done." "We judge it to be a sin in those who do not give thanks to the Lord for their victualls from the word 'give thanks to God in everything.'" "We judge it to be a sin for brethren or sisters to bleed on the Lord's Day without extraordinary occasion." There are some notices forbidding women "professing Godliness" to dress themselves with immodest or costly apparel. One village Church had a nice regard for the feelings of mistaken humanity, for the admonition on this subject was to be "done by some good Old Woman, and that not in the name of the Church, but as an Individual."

Two curious ordinances, which have now quite disappeared, are mentioned in the oldest records: anointing the sick with oil, and love-feasts. In a Church meeting at Guyhern, we find the decree "That ordinances of anointing with oil to be used where required, with the prayer of the elders." The love-feast was usually held before the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It served a useful as well as a religious purpose, for at a time when Baptists had to journey ten or fifteen miles to meet together for

worship, they needed some material, as well as spiritual, refreshment.

Hymns and music were not customary in the earliest Dissenting Churches of the county. In St. Andrew's meeting-house the first hymns used were composed by Ann Rennew, known as the "blind maid of Impington." As a girl she had joined Oasland's Church at Cottenham, and afterwards migrated to Hussey's Church in Cambridge. The latter tells us she was "a very choice, solid, and experienced Christian." It was her custom to compose a hymn and then walk over to Cambridge to one Leonard Haggis, who carefully wrote it down on paper. Dr. Randall, Professor of Music, and a member of Robinson's congregation, set several of her hymns to music. Ann Rennew's gifts were not of a high order, and her compositions were eventually displaced by Barton's *Psalms*, until Watts' hymns assumed the first place in the favour of the Baptists.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the political, as well as the religious importance of the little Churches we have been describing. It was in Dissenting meetings that the men of Cambridgeshire learned the meaning of democracy. Sometimes, it is true, Robinson's pet abomination, "a Lord-brother," gained undue influence. Yet in theory at least rich and poor were equal, and the humblest could take a share in the election of officers and the management of the

Church. It is sad to find that as a rule women were not allowed to vote until quite the close of the eighteenth century. Still, there is abundant evidence that Nonconformist matrons made their influence felt in the affairs of the Churches. The early Baptists, like the Quakers, recognised women speakers, and from the first women occupied important positions. . . . In the original Church at Amsterdam we find "one ancient widow for a deaconess. She usually sat in a convenient place in the congregation with a little birchen rod in her hand, and kept little children in great awe from disturbing the congregation." Barclay speaks of an "audacious virago" who preached for two hours in the Strand, and who "claps her Bible and thumps the pulpit cushion"; and Edwards tells us as a horrible discovery on his part: "In the Isle of Ely (that land of errors and sectaries) is a woman-preacher also!" What would have been the feelings of this writer if he had been suddenly transplanted to the twentieth century!

XIII.

ROBERT HALL.

"While we are coldly discussing a man's career, sneering at his mistakes, blaming his rashness and labelling his opinions —'he is Evangelical and narrow,' or 'Latitudinarian and Pantheistic,' or 'Anglican and supercilious'—that man in his solitude is perhaps shedding hot tears because his sacrifice is a hard one, because strength and patience are failing him to speak the difficult word, and do the difficult deed."—

George Eliot.

In one of Lord Lytton's novels, *The Caxtons*, there is an interesting reference to the distinguished man who was minister of the St. Andrew's Baptist meeting-house 1791-1807. A Captain, one of the characters, has been reading the biography of Robert Hall, and thus speaks: "What I have seen in this book is courage. Here is a poor creature rolling on the carpet with agony: from childhood to death tortured by a mysterious incurable malady—a malady that is described as 'an internal apparatus of torture,' and who does by his heroism more than bear it,—he puts it out of his power to affect him. . . . Robert Hall reads me a lesson —me, an old soldier who thought myself above taking lessons—in courage at least. And as I came to that passage when in the paroxysms before death he says 'I have not complained, have I, sir?—and I won't complain'—when I came

to that passage I started up and cried, Roland de Caxton, thou hast been a coward." It was this heroic man who was invited to succeed Robinson in 1791.

As a child Robert Hall was precocious. While yet in arms his nurse, so the story goes, taught him the letters of the alphabet from inscriptions in a grave-yard, and before he was nine years old he had read the most important works of Jonathan Edwards, and Butler's *Analogy*. He received a careful education, first at Bristol Academy, and then at Aberdeen University. It was here that he formed a close friendship with a fellow-student, Sir James Macintosh. Endless were the discussions between these two friends on the most abstruse metaphysical problems, and their fellow students would point to them in the streets, "There go Plato and Herodotus!" The friendship was maintained through life: and though Sir James Macintosh rose to high honour he never forgot the Baptist minister who had studied with him at Aberdeen. Once he loyally defended him from the abuse of an enemy, and again and again he sent letters of encouragement to Hall. "I now remember," he writes from Bombay, "the extraordinary union of brilliant fancy with acute intellect which would have excited more admiration than it has done if it had been *dedicated* to the amusement of the great and the learned, instead of being *consecrated* to the far more noble office

of consoling, instructing, and reforming, the poor and the forgotten."

Robert Hall was ordained by his own father to the ministry, and quickly attracted the attention of leading Dissenters. Thus Dr. Ryland, 1785, can write: "Robert Hall, jun., preached wonderfully from Rom. 8. 16. I admire many things in that young man exceedingly, though there are others that make me fear for him. O that the Lord may keep him humble and prudent." And again, later in the year, "Wrote to Robert Hall, jun., this day. . . . His father sends me word that he has been ill: I hope God means to do him good by his complaint in his side."

Hall's first labours at Bristol after completing his College course were not of the happiest nature, and the invitation to Cambridge in 1790 was probably not unwelcome. The frank and manly tone of the letter he received must have attracted him. "The Church has no doctrinal covenant or any other bond of union than Christian love and virtue, and having been well-instructed by the late excellent pastor in the true principles of Christian liberty, they mean not to be brought under the yoke of bondage to any man. The liberty which they claim for themselves they cheerfully allow to others, and especially their pastor." Hall did not expect, nor did he find, an easy task awaiting him in the University town. Theological disputes, and the charges of unorthodoxy levelled at Robert

Robinson, had weakened the Baptist congregation in Cambridge. Only a genuinely great man could have carried on the work of Robinson's best years, and it speaks well for the sagacity of the Cambridge Baptists that they recognised the suitability of Hall for the pastorate.

In his preaching at Bristol, Hall had been feeling his way, but at Cambridge he showed clearly his profound attachment to the great Christian fundamentals. His first sermon as minister at Cambridge was from Hebrews IX., 13, 14. "I intend," he wrote shortly afterwards, "to preach a sermon on the Divinity of Christ. This and the atonement I am more and more convinced lie at the foundation of the true system of vital religion: nor will sinners ever be converted to God by a ministry which excludes them." Naturally such preaching would not please all parties, and at the conclusion of his first service the preacher was met in his vestry by a member of the congregation. "Mr. Hall, this preaching won't do for us: it will suit a congregation of old women!"

But Hall held fearlessly to his course; and the numbers of University men who flocked to hear him soon proved that his preaching appealed to others besides "old women." His eloquence was wonderful, unsurpassed by any English preacher, and his contemporaries regarded Hall's oratory as equal to that of Pitt or Fox.

In the villages around Cambridge it was no uncommon sight to see whole congregations gradually rise to their feet and remain standing, completely under the spell of Hall's marvellous powers. Professor Sedgwick heard the Baptist minister on several occasions, and gave his impressions. He noticed some slight difficulty in articulation at the beginning of a sermon. "But the breathing of his sentences became more easy as he advanced, and before long there was a moral grandeur in his delivery that triumphed over all organic defects or physical weakness. While he rolled out his beautiful and purely constructed sentences one felt as if under the training of a higher nature. In occasional flights of imagination, in discussions of metaphysical subtlety, we were for a while amazed, and almost in fear for the preacher. And then he would come down with an eagle's swoop upon the matter he had in hand and enforce it with a power of eloquence such as I have never felt or witnessed in the preaching of any other man."

Some of Hall's sermons, such as that "On the death of Princess Charlotte," "Sentiments proper to the Present Crisis, 1803," and "Modern Infidelity," are classics in sermonic literature. Here is the famous passage in which the preacher turns from the death of the Princess to the obsequies of a lost soul. "But what, my brethren, if it be lawful to indulge such a

thought, would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find the tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle? or could we realise the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light and the moon her brightness; to cover the ocean with mourning and the heavens with sackcloth? or were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?"

When we remember that these powers of oratory were combined with vast learning and a keen philosophical intellect we can understand what a reputation Hall soon gained in the town and University. So many gownsmen attended his Sunday services that at length a meeting of Heads of Colleges was held to decide how best to prevent this irregularity. But nothing was done; for Dr. Mansel, Master of Trinity, declared that "he admired and revered Mr. Hall . . . . he had ascertained that his preaching was not that of a partisan but of an enlightened minister of Christ; and therefore if he were not the Master of Trinity he should certainly often attend himself."

Hall's sermons had as their subjects the great eternal themes of religion, and he excluded

politics from the pulpit. "The Christian ministry," he wrote, "is in danger of losing something of its sanctity and energy by embarking on the stormy element of political debate." But it was inevitable that a man of such wide interests as Hall should regard it as his duty to deliver at times of national crises certain discourses bearing on the events of the day. Once or twice he wielded his pen with great effect on questions which were agitating the popular mind, as when he was moved to write an *Apology for the Freedom of the Press*. But, on the whole, Hall regretted turning aside from his strictly ministerial work.

Robert Hall was a profound student all his life, never losing his interest in metaphysical problems. His enthusiasm for Plato increased rather than diminished as the years passed. His reading was largely confined to the Greek and Roman classics, but occasionally he condescended to read the literature of the day. After praising Miss Edgeworth's style as superior to that of Mrs. Hannah More he describes the effect of her books upon him: "I was off my guard: their moral character beguiled me: I read volume after volume with eagerness: but I could not preach with any effect for six weeks after reading them. She is the most irreligious writer I ever read."

But though Hall was a great reader, it must not be supposed that he neglected the social

side of life. In congenial company he proved himself a brilliant conversationalist, and Cottle describes the pleasure of being in the society of S. T. Coleridge and Robert Hall, "when the collision of equal minds elicited light." If the occasion seemed to demand it Hall could be satirical. When a sanctimonious student bemoaned his own hardness of heart, the preacher's reply was to the point, "Well, thy head is soft enough!" And when a youth, thinking of entering the ministry, remarked, "You know, sir, I mustn't hide my talent in a napkin," Hall mildly suggested, "Then put it in a pocket handkerchief." But Hall was never intentionally unkind. As he used to tell people who admired their own frankness, "Many people forget that these are Christian precepts: 'Be courteous, tender, and kind-hearted.'" And he tried to carry into practice what he preached. In spite of his multifarious studies he found time to visit his flock. He usually went to see them in the evening when the whole family would be at home. In calling on the poorer members of his congregation he took with him his own tea and sugar, "taking care there should be more than could possibly be needed, and asking permission to leave the remainder behind."

Although Hall appreciated the intellectual opportunities of residence in a University town, he was never happy in Cambridge. He was a terribly lonely man. In his early Bristol

years he had been disappointed in love by a clever woman who treated him with some cruelty, and as he sat solitary in his rooms in Petty Cury the great preacher was often a prey to morbid fears and fits of depression. In his lurid imagination the very gravestones in St. Andrew's Churchyard seemed to "rise in rapid succession from the graves, and beat against the Church tower like boys playing at fives or tennis." Hall was depressed by the climate of Cambridge, and the scenery around displeased him. "Here there is nothing to enliven the spirits; when you walk out it looks like nature *laid out*, sir!"

In the minds of most Cambridge men the Granta is associated with peaceful hours and happy dreams. But the river never inspired the great preacher. When a friend praised the trees on the way to Grantchester, Hall replied gruffly, "Yes, sir, I recollect—Willows, I believe, sir—Nature hanging out signals of distress, sir!" And with the same feeling of irritation he addressed another friend, "Before I came to Cambridge I had read in the prize poems—of 'the banks of the Cam' and of 'the sweetly flowing stream' and so on, but when I arrived here I was sadly disappointed. When I first saw the river as I passed over King's College Bridge I could not help exclaiming, 'Why the stream is standing still to see people drown themselves!' and that, I am sorry to say, is a

permanent feeling with me. . . . Shocking place for the spirits, sir; I wish you may not find it so. It must be the very focus of suicides. Were you ever at Bristol? *There* is scenery, and so there is even at Aberdeen. The Don is a *river*, and the Severn is a *river*, but not even a poet would so designate the Cam, unless by an obvious figure he termed it the *sleeping* river."

Hall suffered very keenly from these moods of despondency, the result sometimes of overwork; and once during his Cambridge ministry his mind gave way beneath the strain, and he had to be removed to a place of quiet under a doctor's care. It was a recurrence of the same troubles which led to his resignation of the Cambridge pastorate in 1807. Bitterly disheartened, and very fearful of some serious development of his maladies, Hall retired to a Leicestershire village. But the work of this great man was not yet finished. Some of the most useful years of his life were yet before him as a preacher in Leicester, and afterwards at Bristol. At Leicester he married. The story of his courtship is somewhat droll. At Cambridge, when his friends carefully introduced him to various intellectual ladies, he said "he didn't want a wife who knew Greek," and he certainly remained true to his ideals. One day the distinguished divine called on a wealthy lady and informed her that he was considering the possibility of marriage. "I am not accepted yet, and in fact I have not spoken

to her!" In response to eager enquiries for the name of the lady so honoured, Hall replied, "Madam, your own Mary." The lady, surprised beyond measure, asked if she should have the maid called into the drawing room. "No, I will go and speak to her in the kitchen," said the bold divine, and forthwith departed. "Mary, do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?"—and then "Mary, do you think you could love me?" so the story goes, were the questions asked. Happily, Mary had long found something to honour in Robert Hall, and the answer was in the affirmative. In spite of the gloomy forebodings of the preacher's friends the marriage proved a happy one. Mary, though she did not know a word of Greek, had some admirable qualities. When friends came to dinner she was, as Hall used jocularly to remark, "as busy as Napoleon would be in arranging his army previous to fighting a mighty battle."

After his marriage Hall enjoyed some of the happiest years of his life. But his physical sufferings were still of the most painful character. One day he was discussing with Wilberforce his idea of heaven. "My idea of heaven," said Wilberforce, "is love"; and "Mine," added Hall, "is rest." It was so natural that one who suffered so keenly and continuously should say this, and at last the "rest" Hall had so often desired was at hand. In 1831 a hard and difficult life came to an end. "Are you comfortable in

Rev. Robert Hall, Cambridge

your mind?" said his wife to him on his death-bed. "Very comfortable, very comfortable," was the reply, "Come, Lord Jesus—come"—and he hesitated, unable to utter another syllable. One of his daughters standing by added "quickly," and the dying man looked up gratefully.

Thus died a great servant of Jesus Christ. Cambridge has possessed many divines, but few of nobler character than Robert Hall; she has had many preachers, but none so distinguished as the Baptist minister of St. Andrew's Church. But how little the crowds which flocked to hear him realised the sufferings of the preacher. This was the verdict of the doctor after his death. "Probably no man ever went through more physical suffering than Mr. Hall. He was a fine example of the triumph of the higher powers of mind, exalted by religion, over the infirmities of the body."

XIV.

UNIVERSITY TESTS.

"A cow is a very good animal in the field, but we turn her out of a garden."—*Dr. Johnson.*

In 1768, six students, followers of Wesley, were expelled from Oxford University for attending illicit conventicles. Apropos of this expulsion, Boswell records an interesting conversation. *Dr. Johnson*: "They were examined and found to be mighty ignorant fellows." *Boswell*: "Was it not hard to expel them? I am told they were good beings." *Dr. Johnson*: "I believe they might be good beings, but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field, but we turn her out of a garden." This frankly expressed opinion of the doctor suggests the attitude of many dons to Dissent during the eighteenth century, at Oxford and Cambridge. Nonconformity was something vulgar, low, inexplicable. The University authorities had no real desire to persecute; they simply did not understand the Dissenting position. It seems well nigh incredible to-day that Nonconformists were wholly excluded from Oxford University, or that subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles was required on matriculation. At Cambridge

they were kindly permitted to enter and matriculate without subscription, but they were not allowed to take their degrees. This restriction had originated in a command of James I. to the University authorities during a stay at Newmarket. For some years the limitation fell into abeyance owing to the injunctions of the Long Parliament (1640), which abolished subscription "as against the law and liberty of the subject," and even declared that the wearing of surplices "ought not to be pressed." But these decrees were rescinded at the Restoration, and it was not till the latter part of the eighteenth century that any serious attempts were made to give Nonconformists their just rights at the Universities.

The earliest efforts to abolish subscription were made by three members of Jesus College, Tyrwhitt, Edwards, and Frend. The first grace in favour of the Dissenters was proposed by Tyrwhitt 1771, but was contemptuously rejected. In the following year John Jebb, of Peterhouse, preached to the University from Acts xv, 10, denouncing subscription. In 1773 the question was brought to the notice of the House of Commons, and shortly afterwards Robinson published his *Arcana, or the Principles of the Late Petitioners to Parliament for Relief in the matter of Subscription.* But although the matter was eagerly discussed at Cambridge, nothing effective was accomplished. During

the closing years of the century the Dissenters and their friends in the University were very unpopular. Some of them had expressed their sympathy with republican principles, and on more than one occasion the houses of well known local Nonconformists suffered from mob violence. The efforts of the abolitionists were checked, and nothing further was done to remove Dissenting grievances in the University till well into the nineteenth century.

In 1818 a curious incident occurred which throws light on the early relations between religion and science in the University. The professor of botany, unable to fulfil his duties, had, with the permission of the Vice-Chancellor, invited Sir James Smith to deliver his lectures. But the tutors of the various colleges objected, on the ground that the latter was neither a member of the University "nor a member of the Church of England." In 1833, Professor Pryme proposed a grace for the appointment of a syndicate to discuss the question of subscription, but this was rejected; and in the following year Professor Hewett's grace to excuse medical students met with the same treatment. But interest was now thoroughly aroused in the question. A meeting was held in Downing College, and sixty-two resident members of the Senate despatched a petition to Parliament in favour of the abolition of a test which had been imposed by James I. Needless to say, there

was a counter petition from a hundred and ten worthy members of the Senate, and great excitement prevailed in Cambridge. The Regius Professor of Divinity wrote a pamphlet trying to show the profound dangers of intercourse between young men who differed widely in theological beliefs, and this stirred that interesting character, Connop Thirlwall, to write a scathing reply, in which even college services, "the constant repetition of a heartless mechanical service," came in for criticism. In Parliament, the petition in favour of abolition was supported by Earl Grey; but although a measure giving effect to the petition passed the House of Commons, it was easily thrown out in the House of Lords. Nothing more could be done for the time being. Most of the members of the Cambridge Senate were clearly opposed to any change in existing regulations, and in 1837 further distinguished themselves by petitioning against the abolition of Church Rates!

Nevertheless, opinion in favour of removing Dissenters' grievances was quietly growing. In 1852 the University Commissioners recommended the abolition of subscription, and at last in 1854-6 Parliament opened degrees and scholarships to Nonconformists. On Oct. 22nd, 1856, W. H. F. Johnson, a Baptist undergraduate, by migrating from Corpus to Trinity, was able to take his degree. Subsequently he resided

in Cambridge as a schoolmaster, and became a greatly beloved and honoured deacon of the St. Andrew's Baptist Church.

But although Dissenters were now tolerated, their rights were not yet recognised, and it was no easy matter for a student to remain loyal to his principles. Attendance at college chapels was enforced with the utmost rigour upon all alike. An undergraduate of St. John's, W. H. Bompas, afterwards the well-known K.C., heard that certain Anglicans had been excused morning chapel in order to teach in a Sunday School. He naturally desired the same privilege for himself in the Baptist Sunday School, and visited his dean on the subject. "Do you wear your cap and gown when you go to the place?" "Yes." "Then you must understand that you cannot be allowed to take your academicals into a conventicle. Good morning." This was equivalent to a refusal, as academical dress must correctly be worn in Cambridge on Sundays. Christ's, which had educated John Smith, was the first college to excuse the presence of Dissenters at college chapel on condition that they attended *regularly* their own services.

Although the legislation of 1854-6 allowed degrees to Nonconformists, the Master of Arts who went to inscribe his name in the University book found two columns before him. If he signed his name in the one, well and good; if in

the other it meant that he was a Dissenter, and therefore debarred from all University privileges and honours. He could obtain no office or fellowship. He was even prohibited because of his religious beliefs from voting for the University representative in Parliament! In 1858, W. H. Bompas was fifth Wrangler, but because of his Nonconformity was unable to proceed to a fellowship. James Stirling (Trin.), a Presbyterian, who was Senior Wrangler in 1860, and W. S. Aldis (Trin.), a Baptist, who was Senior Wrangler in 1861, both suffered in the same way. However proficient a man might prove himself in mathematics, he was excluded from any teaching office in the University, because of his religious opinions! It was quite time the anomaly should be removed. In 1867, the question of Nonconformist grievances was brought up in Parliament, and in the following year a brave little "Association for the Removal of Religious Disabilities" was formed in Cambridge. Mr. W. S. Aldis was the President, and the hon. secretaries were Messrs. Neville Goodman of Peterhouse, and T. N. Toller of Christ's. On the committee were some enthusiastic young students, such as Angus and Harris of Clare, with Cox and Jones of Trinity. Mr. Goodman's rooms in Peterhouse often witnessed busy scenes when numerous letters on the subject were hastily directed to the Dissenting ministers of the country. At the late Mrs. Aldis' Monday evening "At Homes"

the members of the "jolly little society" gathered for the most animated discussions. Sometimes the opportunity would be seized to urge on undergraduates the value of writing home to beg relatives to use their influence with the local members of Parliament. Sometimes a laugh would be raised when allusion was made to a letter in the *Independent* from a certain Master who claimed his college endowments exclusively for the Anglican Church, seeing that £6,000 of its income were derived from post-Reformation sources. With all his zeal, Mr. Neville Goodman was not as confident of speedy triumph as the energetic hostess, and one day, in a jesting mood, promised her a pair of gloves if the Dissenters' disabilities were removed before 1878! But the end of the struggle was nearer than he anticipated. In 1870, Sir J. Coleridge brought forward a bill which met most of the demands of the opponents of religious tests. Of course it was not quite satisfactory to all parties. Mr. Aldis, and the Rev. W. Robinson, the Cambridge Baptist minister, waited in vain on Mr. Gladstone to urge the abolition of clerical fellowships. However it was a great measure which was carried through Parliament in 1871. By Clause 3 it was enacted "that no person taking any academical degrees—other than degrees in divinity—or holding academic or collegiate offices, be required to subscribe any formulary of faith." At last the victory was

won, after a century of hard fighting. Mrs. Aldis and her friends watched the passage of the fateful bill from the gallery of the House. As soon as the favourable result was known, a telegram was hastily despatched to Cambridge, and a post card followed to Mr. Goodman with two words of triumph, "My gloves!" Mr. Goodman said afterwards that he was tempted to reply, "Have patience, and I will pay thee all." Instead, he quietly waited and called on Mrs. Aldis at the earliest opportunity. "What is the number?" he inquired guardedly, "One hundred and twenty-nine to eighty-nine," was the reply. Mr. Goodman looked profoundly astonished. And then the explanation was forthcoming, that while Mrs. Aldis was speaking of divisions, Mr. Goodman was thinking dolefully of gloves. It is needless to add that he kept his promise.

The Bishop of Gloucester had predicted that "a heavy judgement would follow if directly, or indirectly, their Lordships permitted the establishment of an irreligious, a creedless, and it might be, a godless University," but, happily, nothing very serious ensued at Cambridge. Nonconformists poured into the University in increasing numbers, and before the close of the nineteenth century some of the leading positions were held by Free Churchmen. In 1883 a band of students met together and formed the University Nonconformist Union to hold meetings on Sunday evenings after the services

at the churches. It soon proved of incalculable service in promoting social intercourse between Free Churchmen and providing opportunity for the discussion of religious and other questions.

Even the Act of 1871, comprehensive as it was, did not place Free Churchmen on a complete equality with Churchmen in the national universities. Divinity degrees and professorships are still closed to Nonconformists. Happily, there is now a movement among members of the Established Church to abolish, or modify, a restriction which must seem ridiculous to outsiders. No one can say to-day, as Robinson could, that "divinity is no science in the Universities," but it may be suggested that theology can never occupy her true place at Cambridge as queen of the sciences while professorships are confined to members of one Church. Changes are always difficult in old-established institutions, as those who sympathise with the claim for women's degrees know full well. There are aged saints whose prejudices must be considered; there are sacred memories which rightly should be respected. And reformers have often had to acknowledge ruefully that there is still some truth in young John Sterling's words at the Cambridge Union: "Have they not a black dragoon in every parish on good pay and rations, horsemeat and mansmeat, to patrol and battle for these

things?" Still, one need not be an idle visionary to predict that before five years have passed the last limitations which Free Churchmen endure at the Universities will be removed.

It is due in no small measure to the Christian Student Movement that the happiest relations now exist in the University between Churchmen and Nonconformists. "The evangelisation of the world in this generation" is an ambition which inspires Christians of all shades of opinion. The alleviation of social misery at home is a work in which men of different Churches find they can, and must, co-operate. Thus Churchmen and Nonconformists discover that they have more in common than they formerly supposed. This desire for a better understanding is spreading from the University to the town and county. In a certain village not long ago a minister had a protracted illness, and the vicar of the parish proved his best friend and most constant visitor. In such quiet ways men find for themselves that the problem of Christian unity can only be solved by love. In the Church Congress held at Cambridge, 1910, a number of the delegates was entertained by Free Churchmen, and many pleasant courtesies were interchanged. At a meeting held to discuss Christian unity, the Archbishop of York spoke out, not as an ecclesiastic, but as a Christian gentleman. "If they would accom-

plish their object, they must have free intercourse with those who differed from them. In that intercourse there must be no trace of patronage or a sort of self-conscious, self-approving kindliness. . . . If their intercourse was to be fruitful, it must be frank."

XV.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.

"My heart was greatly impressed by something I heard my mother say. She said she had heard many people swear and blaspheme God, but one thing she had never known—she had never heard a man say he had sought Christ, and Christ had rejected him."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

The fen country of Cambridgeshire rarely attracts strangers. It is seldom visited by tourists. It is dull and uninteresting, except to those who have learned to appreciate its special charms. But this district of East Anglia will ever be associated in the minds of Baptists with the names of the greatest preacher and probably the greatest theologian their denomination has produced. Waterbeach will always be connected with the name of C. H. Spurgeon, and Soham with that of Andrew Fuller.

Soham is a small market town situated about five miles from Ely. It is of some historic interest, for forty years before St. Etheldreda founded her Abbey at Ely, a religious institution was established at Soham by St. Felix, "the Apostle of East Anglia." Here, right in the centre of the fenland, Andrew Fuller spent

the early years of his life, and the spot is still shown by the river where the youth of sixteen was baptised. Andrew Fuller was actually born at Wicken, 1754, but shortly afterwards his parents removed with their child to Soham. Young Andrew seems to have been a fine, healthy lad, fond of manly exercises and sports. But he had a very tender conscience, and, like Bunyan, was often distressed by a deep sense of his sinfulness. "Being of an athletic frame, and of a daring spirit, I was often engaged in such exercises and exploits as might have issued in death if the good hand of God had not preserved me. I also frequently engaged in games of hazard, which though not to any amount, were very bewitching to me, and tended greatly to corrupt my mind." In the Soham Church records there is a curious entry, which shows the rigidity of the early Baptists. 1774. "Aug. 28th, Bro. Benjamin Fuller under admonition for the sin of wrestling. Sept. 11th, Bro. Benjamin Fuller received the right hand of forgiveness on his Confession and Repentance for his sin." This quotation is interesting when we recall the allusion in *Rab and his Friends* to the prowess of Andrew Fuller as a wrestler. His first religious impressions came to Fuller when a boy of fourteen years old.

"One winter evening I remember going with a number of other boys to a smith's shop, to warm ourselves by his fire. Presently they

began to sing vain songs. This appeared to me so much like revelling that I felt something within me which would not suffer me to join them; and while I sat silent, in rather an unpleasant muse, those words sunk into my soul: 'What doest thou here, Elijah'? I immediately left the company; yet, shocking to reflect upon, I walked home murmuring in my heart against God that I could not be let alone and suffered to take my pleasure like other young people."

Perhaps it was well that one who was afterwards to preach and write on the greatest themes should himself pass through a time of doubt and perplexity.

"One day as I was walking alone I began to think seriously what would become of my soul. I felt myself the slave of sin . . . . I walked sorrowfully along, repeating those words: 'Iniquity will be my ruin! Iniquity will be my ruin!' . . . . While poring over my unhappy case, those words of the Apostle suddenly occurred to my mind—'Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law but under grace.'" At last, after many conflicts of soul, Fuller found peace, and was baptised 1770.

The Baptist Church which Fuller joined was the product of a split from the Independents, who had declared to their unfortunate Baptist brethren "That a Waterman should never more

enter the Pulpit, and We might be gone as soon as we would." The pastor who baptised Andrew Fuller was a certain Mr. Eve, a high Calvinist, and many were the theological disputes among his flock. These early Baptists took their religion seriously, and were not content to shelve problems. Thus the Church-book records: "In the year 1770 arose a dispute in the Baptist Church at Soham respecting the moral freedom of the Will"!

Fuller took a great interest in these questions, and spent much time in prayer and meditation. At one meeting a deacon requested him to read a portion of the Scripture, "and if he found liberty, to drop any remarks which might occur as he went on." This he did so acceptably (taking Psalm xxx. 5 as his text) that he was asked to speak at a subsequent meeting. But he failed most dismally, went home in great dejection, and could not be persuaded to preach again for more than a year. However, the people believed in the young man, and at length he was invited to succeed Mr. Eve as pastor. Fuller consented, and "from that time," he tells us, "I exercised from the pulpit."

No easy task awaited the young minister, and there are some pathetic entries in the Church-book in Fuller's own hand-writing. "Reproach hath broken my heart; the reproaches of some, with the indifference of others thereat, seemed to have given the mortal wound to my affec-

tions." But Fuller was a devoted pastor, and remained faithful to his charge till 1782, when the Church-book records: "Bro. Fuller left the Church and went to a place called Kittering. The Church unitedly agreed to hold together." It was at Kettering that the real life work of Andrew Fuller began.

Fuller was not such a brilliant preacher as Robert Hall, nor such an interesting personality as Robinson, but he was a man of sterling character and solid worth. People were not fascinated by his eloquence as they were by that of Hall, but, what was much better, they went from his services wishing to live better lives. To-day he is not remembered so much for his preaching as for his connection with the missionary movement. Carey was the first to carry into actual practice the missionary ideal, but it was Fuller who, by his writings and addresses, made the movement really possible. His famous book, *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*, was indirectly a summons to all Christian people to send the Gospel into the dark places of the earth. No one has any right to speak slightingly of Calvinism. In itself it is a great creed; it has always produced manly characters, and to-day some of the truest servants of God are to be discovered in little Particular Baptist communities. But the extravagant type of Calvinism which Fuller found in the Dissenting Churches

of his day was quite contrary to the religion of Jesus Christ. Fuller, in writings full of sanity and commonsense, showed the real weaknesses of hyper-Calvinism, and the duty of spreading the Gospel in heathen lands.

Soham is seldom visited by Cambridge missionary enthusiasts, and yet it was here the great missionary pioneer was trained for his work. When little more than a boy he was pondering over the vast problems of religion. One day a drunken labourer declared to the lad "it was not his fault that he could not save himself from sin," and roused in Fuller's mind the question of "the power of sinful man to do the will of God." In this quiet little Cambridgeshire town Fuller gradually "dared to invite" sinners to Christ, and learned "the *dimensions* of Christ's love."

Very different in many ways from Fuller was the distinguished preacher C. H. Spurgeon. Yet both preached, and realized, in their own deep experience, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Spurgeon was born in Kelvedon, Essex, 1834, but his religious life began when he acted as usher in a school at Newmarket. He declared afterwards that he owed most of his theology at this time to a certain old cook in the household who read *The Gospel Standard*. Like Fuller, he went through a time of agonising doubt and perplexity before his conversion. "I could not believe that it was possible that my sins could

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be forgiven. I do not know why, but I seemed to be *the odd person in the world.* When the catalogue was made out, it appeared to me that, for some reason, I must have been left out."

The story of Spurgeon's conversion is well known. "I had heard of the Primitive Methodists how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache, but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I could be saved. The Minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last a very thin-looking man, a shoe-maker, tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. The text was 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' . . . I thought I could dance all the way home, and I could understand what John Bunyan meant when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land about his conversion."

On May 3rd, 1850, Spurgeon was baptised by Mr. Cantlow at Isleham Ferry.

"*The wind blew down the river with a cutting blast* as my turn came to wade into the flood, but after I had walked a few steps, and noted the people in the ferry-boat, and in boats, and on either shore, I felt as if heaven and earth and all hell might gaze upon me, for I was not ashamed to own myself, there and then, a follower of the Lamb."

After leaving Newmarket, Spurgeon became usher in a school at Cambridge, and it was then

he began to preach. His first sermon was delivered in a cottage at Teversham from the text: "Unto you which believe He is precious." "Bless your dear heart, how old are you?" said a voice from the back as he concluded the discourse. And it certainly was a wonderful text for a young man to select, but Spurgeon then, as ever afterwards, was simply telling out of his own heart all that Christ meant to him. The sermon was apparently unprepared. A local preacher had asked Spurgeon to accompany another young man to the village of Teversham. Each imagined that the other was the preacher for the day, and great was their surprise on discovering their mutual mistake. However, at length, Spurgeon agreed to preach: and thus in a humble cottage which still exists, the greatest of English preachers began his ministry. Subsequently, Spurgeon became pastor of a congregation at Waterbeach, with a salary of £45 a year.

The history of his ministry in London is too well known to need narration. The sometime country minister, with his simple story of salvation through Christ, reached the hearts of London crowds as no preacher had ever done. His sermons were published, translated into many languages, and sent to the furthest quarters of the globe. And through these publications the voice of the preacher, now dead, still speaks to men. There are multi-

tudes in all ranks of life who still feel that no one understands the deepest secrets of their soul so well as the great Baptist minister. The writer remembers being present on one occasion at a gathering of German clergymen, certainly with no love of German Baptists, and hearing them confess the deep debt they owed to Spurgeon. And we in England, of all creeds and confessions, may well do honour to-day to one of the most faithful servants of Jesus Christ in the nineteenth century.

Spurgeon was a large-hearted man, with a fund of ready wit which appealed to the common people. He was a great lover of the humanity of humanity, and full of sympathy with all kinds of suffering. But though he knew how to comfort the sad, he never forgot the main object of preaching. As he wrote in the early days of his ministry: "I now think I am bound never to preach a sermon without preaching to sinners. I do think that a minister who can preach a sermon without addressing sinners does not know how to preach." Spurgeon was no theologian, but he understood human nature, and the great deep needs of man, and preached in season and out of season the gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

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